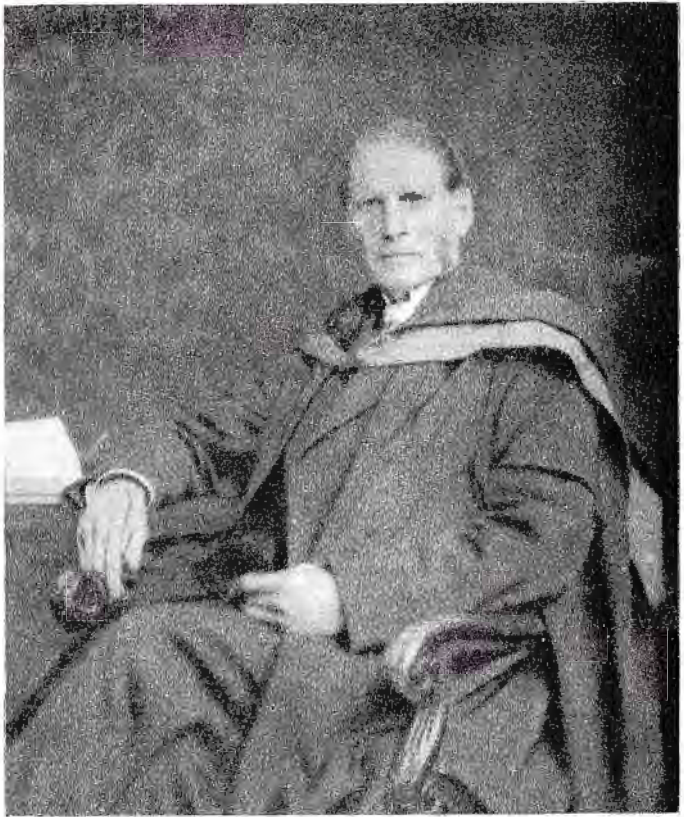


RECORDS OF GRACE
IN SUTHERLAND



Rev. Donald Munro, D.D.

RECORDS OF GRACE IN SUTHERLAND

Compiled by

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and

Edited by

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FOREWORD

THE publication of this book has been attended with great difficulty. Of this, Principal Macleod in his *Donald Munro, of Ferintosh and Rogart*, has given some indication (c.f. pp. 27-29). If ever Dr. Munro made any attempt to prepare for the press the vast amount of information he had gathered over a course of many years concerning the religious past of his native county, such a compilation could nowhere be found after his death—nothing but notebooks, and more notebooks; and all filled with precious jottings, unrelated and unrevised.

The difficulty of editing such notes appeared to be insuperable and, in fact, would have been so had not Mrs. Alexander Gunn of Lairg—herself nearly related to Dr. Munro—with infinite patience and industry sorted them out topographically, and then transcribed them word for word.

After that the difficulty of preparing Mrs. Gunn's manuscripts for the press still remained; for, obviously, Dr. Munro had written his notes hurriedly, just as he had received them from his old-world informants, with no thought of niceties of language or literary style, but desiring solely to put on record an exact and faithful rendering of the information which had been communicated to him. These notes had never been revised, and to publish them as they stood would have been a great injustice to the memory of their compiler. On the other hand, to alter them too freely might entail the elimination in great part of that pungent, graphic phraseology so characteristic of Dr. Munro, which would be a great disappointment to those who knew him well. The editor, therefore, has done his best to keep to

the middle of the way, and he hopes that this explanation will disarm any criticism which, on the score of literary style, might readily be forthcoming.

The editor does not consider it necessary to attempt any appreciation of Dr. Munro in this work. That already has been ably and amply done by Principal John Macleod, D.D.—who was his life-long friend—in the volume to which reference has already been made. Let it suffice here to say that as a man, a preacher and a friend, he was unique. Unworldly, old-worldly, and unlike everyone else, to memory he appears as a man who stood apart from his generation—although by no means from his fellowmen—one who in his own person preserved the aspirations and outlook of a long-past day when the Gospel of sovereign grace triumphed in the straths and glens of the North.

For the benefit of Southern readers, it may perhaps be advisable to explain that in the Highlands the services of the Communion season are continued over five successive days. Thursday is the *Fast Day* and is observed as a day of humiliation and prayer. Friday is the day for self-examination, and in the forenoon the service is held to which frequent reference is made in the following pages—the Fellowship Meeting. At this service a passage of Scripture is given out, generally by one of the local elders, in the light of which the characteristic marks of the Lord's people are to be traced. This is called "the Question", and the duty of the senior minister present is to "open" it, that is, to explain its setting and import. Then the "men" present are called upon in succession to "speak to the Question", after which all is summed up by the other minister in his "closing of the Question". As the text is not known beforehand, the exercise is a rather severe test, not only of readiness of mind and speech on the part of those who engage in it, but also of their theological knowledge and spiritual experience. Saturday is the day of preparation. Sabbath is the great day when the Lord's

Supper is dispensed with a simplicity and solemnity seen nowhere else; while Monday concludes the season as a day of thanksgiving. Such seasons are frequently times of reviving and refreshing, even in these present degenerate days, when the glory has so largely departed.

Special thanks are due to Mr. Donald Jack of Rogart—Dr. Munro's brother-in-law—for placing at the editor's disposal the material left in his custody; and to Miss Dinah Munro of Laxdale, Stornoway, who gave valued services in typing out the revised sheets for the press.

KENNETH A. MACRAE,

FREE CHURCH MANSE,
STORNOWAY.

APRIL, 1948.

The MSS edited by Mr. MacRae amounted to about half the material in the present volume. Mr. MacRae handed these along with the rest of the material at his disposal to the Free Church of Scotland Publications Committee. He suggested that the material he had prepared for the press should be published as a first volume to be followed by a second should this appear warranted by the reception accorded to the first. The Committee, however, decided to publish the whole as one volume. They remitted to the Convener and another member to prepare the remaining MSS for the printer. They acknowledge with deep gratitude the work done by Mr. MacRae on the earlier part of this book. They record their sincere thanks to the *Northern Chronicle*, Inverness, for permission to use their

photograph of Dr. Munro. The Convener would add his personal thanks to three friends, one of whom typed the whole volume and two who assisted in reading the proofs.

HUGH G. MACKAY,

Convener.

Publications Committee.

May, 1953.

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CHAPTER I

STRATH BRORA AND CLYNE

CAPTAIN ADAM GORDON, STRATH BRORA

THOUGH the heritors of Clyne were not in general specially distinguished for their religious zeal, one at least of their number was a man of fervent piety. He was Adam Gordon of Kilchalumkill, now known as Gordonbush. He went to Germany in 1634 with Colonel Sir Hector Munro of Foulis after whose death he served in the Swedish Army. He was promoted to be Captain whereupon he returned to Scotland and raised "a Company of able men out of Sutherland". Having shipped with his men at Unes, now called the Little Ferry, he arrived at Gottenburg, Sweden, on November 6th, 1635. From that port he wrote to Sir Robert Gordon on the eleventh day of the same month a letter which clearly evinced his devout spirit. He seemingly had a presentiment that he was to die abroad, which proved to be true.

A grace very tersely and felicitously worded in Gaelic, was once well known to not a few of the worthies of the North, some of whom, including James Macdonald, the father of Dr. Macdonald, Ferintosh, made use of it, when circumstances called for brevity. According to some, it originated on the Continent, during the wars in defence of Protestantism. One version of the tradition is to the following effect. A certain Captain from Sutherland of the name of Gordon and related to the house of Dunrobin, was marching with his men, who belonged to the North of Scotland, on a very hot day, when they came to a small

brook, but, before partaking of the cooling draught, he uncovered his head and asked the divine blessing in the following striking terms. “An Ti a cheannaich gum beannaich’s dha ainm gu robh a’ ghlòir”. “May He who provided (literally, *bought*) bless, and to His name be the praise.”

Now if the tradition in its leading particulars is well founded, there is good reason to conclude that the officer referred to was Adam Gordon of Kilchalumkill. No doubt there was another Adam Gordon, a brother of the covenanting Earl of Sutherland, who was a Captain and fell in the battle of Nördlingen in Germany in 1634 at the early age of twenty-three. He appears to have been much esteemed, but it is most unlikely that his mastery of Gaelic was such as to enable him to express his thoughts so happily in that language. It is, however, almost a certainty that Captain Gordon of Kilchalumkill must have known Gaelic well, for in those days few on his property in Strath Brora knew English, so that he was brought up in a Gaelic atmosphere. Then contemporary documents prove that his men were from his native country, and therefore must have understood the language in which the grace was said, while his letter reveals such ardent piety that one is not surprised that he should ask a blessing even on a drink of cold water.

HUGH SUTHERLAND (MACTHEÀRLAICH)
STRATH BRORA

Of the “men” that kept the Gospel lamp burning in the parish of Clyne, in the last decades of the eighteenth century, during a ministry more remarkable for its length than for its evangelical light, one of the most outstanding was Hugh Sutherland or “MacTheàrlaich” who for many years was catechist of the parish. This eminent worthy

lived in Achnacoille, a township on the right bank of the Black Water, though the Sutherlands from whom he was descended are said to have hailed from Scotari on the Northern slope of Ben Horn.

It cannot now be definitely determined when he received his first religious impressions, though it would seem that like Obadiah of old, he feared the Lord from his youth. He was a man of amiable spirit, of deep piety and saintly character. Like Moses he spent much time on the Mount; many an hour of sweet communion with his Maker did he pass in the quiet of his barn, or under the leafy canopy of the thick wood, which at the time covered the hillside, behind his dwelling. In his daily life he carried about with him not a little of the aroma of the "ivory palaces" of meditation and prayer, so that it was felt by all with whom he came in contact that his conversation was in Heaven. This was the secret of his great influence in his native Strath, where the people looked up to him with feelings not only of respect, but of veneration. In patriarchal fashion he moved among them taking a lively and prayerful interest in their temporal and more especially in their spiritual welfare. Evil doers fled from his presence, for he was a faithful, though tender reprover of sin. Yet there was nothing austere in his manner. On the contrary, exercised people were drawn to him to hear his fatherly counsel. Some indeed could not meet him on the highway without being impressed by his saintly look and weighty words. He accosted all that met him; even a stranger he would not allow to pass without at least addressing him in the words of his usual salutation—"Gum beannaicheadh an Cruithfhear sibh"—which were spoken with the greatest solemnity and with uncovered head, for the good men of Sutherland in those days, from a spirit not of sanctimoniousness, but of reverence, would not mention the name of the Most High when in the open air, without raising their broad blue bonnets.

Such was his loving solicitude about the highest interests of his fellow creatures that he would seize every favourable opportunity of directing their minds to eternal things. Children, he not only patted with fatherly tenderness, but exhorted to "remember their Creator in the days of their youth", and to young men and maidens, as well as to those of riper years, when he found them alone, he spoke, with moistened eye and tremulous voice about their spiritual welfare; and yet there was nothing objectionably obtrusive in such direct personal dealings with his fellow men, for his gentleness of manner and habitual spirituality of mind enabled him to introduce religious subjects in a way that few could resent: for even the careless could not fail to be convinced of his sincerity and singleness of heart.

A visit from this man of God was always considered a great privilege by the different families in the parish whether in health or illness, for his presence was like a blink of sunshine. Even the younger members would listen with the greatest delight to his interesting reminiscences of ministers and men of former days; while to the sick and sorrowing his fervent prayers and helpful words were often as a balm to a painful wound.

As a Friday speaker he occupied a very high place, for his clear views of divine truth were expressed in striking language and with such impressiveness of manner. But it was as a catechist that he excelled and in this work he was most devoted. He engaged in the work of catechizing during the winter months when he visited the various townships of the parish. In remote or populous districts he remained for several days and sometimes for a week, holding daily two meetings, or *diets* as they were termed, each in a different house. The people who were hospitable to a degree, invariably considered it a great pleasure to have an opportunity of entertaining him, but the good man who "laboured not for the bread that perisheth" showed

his thorough unselfishness by insisting on no special preparation being made for him beyond the ordinary fare of the household.

It may be of interest to some in the present generation to know how a diet of catechizing was conducted more than a century ago, and possibly an account of such meetings may be understood all the better by describing in the first place the cottages in which they were usually held. It may here be stated that nearly all the crofters' houses in the parish, especially in Strath Brora, were of the same simple construction. In the erection of these dwelling houses, after a row of rough stones was laid down to mark the foundation, the couples were set up at equal distances. Each of the rafters in the coupling was generally formed out of a single elder tree, when any one of its strong arms grew at anything approaching the requisite angle. The couples were secured at the top, not by iron spikes, but by large wooden pins driven through augur-bored holes, and several feet below the ridging the couples were connected by a thick cross-beam called "an spàrr". Walls were mostly of undressed stones, in which quantities of fog (i.e. moss) and clay were used instead of mortar to render them tolerably airtight. "Cabers" formed the roof, with a covering of turf, which was thatched over with rushes or heather. The houses were low and narrow, and the cattle, as well as the family, were sheltered under the same roof; the buildings in order to afford the necessary accommodation being often long enough to resemble miniature streets. Man and beast entered by the same door. The living room or "ceàrn" was kept sufficiently fumigated by the smoke which oftentimes rose in thick volumes from a peat fire in the middle of the clay-paved floor and which escaped by a hole in the top of the roof. The furniture was of the simplest description. At night the fire-glow ordinarily served for light, but if a better illuminant became necessary, as when an itinerant tailor plied his needle, or

the head of the household took down the Bible from its place in the "bole", or recess in the wall, at family-worship, a splinter of dried bog-pine was kindled.

Such were the crofters' houses in the days of Hugh Sutherland, and in the "ceàrn" of these primitive cottages, he was in the habit of calling together the people of the different districts when he made his annual rounds. The venerable looking man whose countenance, radiant with the light which illuminated his soul told that he had come from the "Throne of Grace" took his place beside the table and in accordance with the universal practice of the Sutherland "men", he began by invoking the Divine blessing on God's Word. Thereafter a few verses of a Psalm were read and sung to one of the plaintive "Long tunes", a chapter was read—or rather translated—for the translation of the whole Bible into Scottish Gaelic had not been issued at that time. Some striking remarks were made on the portion read, but no formal lecture was given. A question of the Shorter Catechism was asked of each one present. These were tested regarding their knowledge of the question repeated. The saintly man encouraged the most timid to answer, while his lucid statements of truth enabled ordinary minds to follow him with intelligence and interest. But it is evident that his questions were not directed exclusively to the understanding, for the spirituality of God's law and fulness of the glorious Gospel were presented with a directness and tenderness that showed how intent he was on reaching the conscience and heart of his hearers. Christian experience too found its due place in his catechizing, and was dealt with in a way eminently fitted to comfort the broken-hearted, and to alarm those that were "at ease in Zion".

For two full hours the oral examination was continued and the attention of the people sustained, for the rich unction which rested on the earnest man affected the audience, not a few of whom were deeply impressed. At

the close of the catechizing a few verses of a Psalm were sung and one of the oldest professing Christians present was called to conclude with prayer, after which the time and place of next diet were announced and the people quietly dispersed.

MacTheàrlaich's catechizing often proved as wells in the desert to thirsty souls, and feasts of fat things to the hungry. These meetings, particularly the mid-day diets, were attended by many exercised individuals from distant townships who had to walk over pathless ways and to wade through bridgeless streams. Indeed it is said that on one occasion a good man made a journey of twenty miles to hear MacTheàrlaich, and that he felt himself amply rewarded by the Gospel banquet which he there enjoyed.

But the labours of this devoted catechist were not confined to the week-day gatherings, for, on the Sabbath evening, prayer meetings—or "Readings" as they were called—were held. In the summer months however, the catechetical part of the reading had to be discontinued owing to the absence of MacTheàrlaich and many of the leading men at the sacramental gatherings. One might suppose that the place assigned to the catechism at these meetings would have resulted in keeping away the youthful section from attending, but such was not the case in Strath Brora in the days of our worthy, for the young were as eager as the old to have the catechizing resumed on the catechist's return. It speaks volumes for the religious spirit which pervaded the community that the lads and young men were wont in the late Autumn, after the close of the Communion season, to approach, on their own accord, some of the "men" desiring them to inform the catechist—for they would not presume to do so themselves—that they were longing to be examined on the catechism at the Readings. It is the Great Day alone that will reveal what Strath Brora owed to the instruction and example of godly Hugh MacTheàrlaich.

ADAM SUTHERLAND, STRATH BRORA

It is a Sabbath evening in Strath Brora about a century ago, and the stillness which broods over that sequestered valley is broken only by the piping of the plover or the shrill cry of the curlew on the hillside. There is seen a man advanced in years, of low stature and benignant countenance, with staff in hand and wearing a long blue cloak, stepping out from the door of a primitively-built cottage in Kilpheadairmore. He moves down the Strath, and, before the small window of every dwelling he stands, for he passes from house to house and calls out in patriarchal fashion, "A' chlann am bheil sibh ullamh?" ("Children are ye ready?"). Everyone recognizes that voice as that of good Adam Sutherland who is now on his way to the prayer-meeting or Reading in Kilbraur School-house nearly three miles from his home; for all the families in the intervening townships have been accustomed for years to listen to his fatherly words which, like the sound of a church bell, have been summoning them to the worship of God, and right heartily do they respond to this call, for practically all who were able to attend the meeting are soon on their way thither. By the time the venerable saint reaches the hamlet of Dalbhaite he is not only accompanied by some of the older worthies of the district such as the Baillies of Torr-soilleir and the Grants or "Pronntachs" of Uarachdcoille, but followed by quite a large company, including matrons with their snow-white mutches and young men and women clad in homespun fabrics.

Observe the decorum with which the large body of people proceed to the house of prayer on the Lord's Day. The old men in front are exchanging views on some passage of Scripture or dealing with some point in Christian experience, or, perchance, recalling some striking saying of the fathers, while they that come behind, including the

young, move on in almost breathless silence—not a few of them straining their ears in the hope of catching some of the instructive remarks that fall from the speakers.

Observe the extraordinary respect that is paid to aged Christians ; for the young, even lads, with all the activity of early manhood, do not venture to pass one of these worthies on the way to public worship, though they know that the best seats in the meeting house are likely to be occupied before they arrive. Such was the sight that might be witnessed on many a Sabbath evening in Strath Brora in the early years of last century. The meeting which occupied between two and three hours is always opened with prayer, and after singing and a portion of Scripture read, the worthy teacher, young Thomas Ross, is called on to read a sermon of some old divine—e.g., Boston, Bunyan or Flavel. The reading, of course, is in Gaelic, yet strange to say the book which the teacher uses is in English, for with the greatest ease he can translate his favourite authors.

Strath Brora in those days was spiritually like a “well watered garden” when we consider not only the number and attainments of the professing Christians who lived there but also the blameless and exemplary conduct of the people in general. Cases of church discipline were practically unknown. Family worship was kept morning and evening in almost every house, and the Lord’s day was strictly observed by all—and perhaps there were few things that were more instrumental, under the Divine blessing, in raising the moral tone of the community than the Godly life and fatherly counsels of Adam Sutherland. This excellent man belonged to a family of Sutherlands who lived in Strath Brora from time immemorial, some of whom were distinguished for their piety. His sister was the maternal grandmother of two brothers who were well-known Friday speakers, William Murray, Free Church elder, Creich, and Adam Murray, Balvraid, Dornoch.

It would be interesting to know, though it is now impossible to ascertain what were the means used to bring our worthy at first to "seek the way to Zion". He was old enough to have remembered the preaching of his parish minister, the eminent Mr. Francis Robertson of Clyne, and it may be that he derived lasting benefit from the pure Gospel sermons of that able divine. But though we must remain uncertain as to the means, we are left in no doubt as to the reality of his conversion, for all who came in contact with him felt he was truly a man of God. He was remarkable for the depth and fervour of his piety and the weight of his Christian character. His earnestness and unction in spiritual exercises gave him a leading place among his contemporaries in religious meetings. A more affecting speaker at a Fellowship Meeting could scarcely be found among the many eminent "men" of his native parish. When he rose in a congregation the opening of his lips was like the breaking of the alabaster box. With a heart aglow with the Divine love and a voice tremulous with emotion, like Rutherford, he delighted to commend "that fair and altogether lovely One". He was a wrestler in prayer and sometimes seemed to be quite oblivious to his surroundings when he had nearness to the Mercy Seat.

At the Reading on Sabbath evening meetings at Kilbraur he was often called on to conclude with prayer, and it was no unusual thing to hear the sound of his tears as they fell on the floor like great rain drops. Sometimes a dry eye could not be seen in the meeting-house as he poured out his heart in prayer; and so real did Heavenly things at times appear to the worshippers in that building that one of them used to say many years afterwards, "I sometimes imagined I should see the Saviour in bodily form in our meeting while Adam Sutherland was engaged in prayer".

It was no ordinary privilege to be present when such a man conducted family worship in his own house or else-

where. One who, when a young boy had been in his employment as a herd, could not forget, even at four-score years, the time spent around the family altar. It is superfluous to state that such a man loved the "gates of Zion" and delighted to attend the great sacramental gatherings where he could enjoy the communion of saints, and listen to the Word of life from the lips of preachers who had felt its power. The last communion which he attended was at Killearnan during the early ministry of the saintly Mr. John Kennedy. His bodily strength was now on the wane, and, besides, he sometimes suffered from severe asthma; but when he heard that the sacrament was to be dispensed in Killearnan, he seemed to renew his youth and resolved to set out thither, a distance of nearly fifty miles (with two intervening ferries). His worthy wife when she understood his intention reminded him of his asthmatic complaint. "Well, my dear", was his reply, "I am to attempt to climb that brac", pointing to a rising ground in front of his house, "and if I can reach the top with a measure of ease, I am resolved to proceed, but if my ailment returns, I shall stay at home." His asthma never troubled him when he was moving up the green slope. He accordingly set out for the Communion, carrying, it is said, a small bundle of bog-pine torches (*coinnlean giuthais*)

which were then generally used instead of candles—to pay his fare across the ferries; for in those days, money was not much in circulation in Highland glens even among crofters who were fairly comfortable. After a journey of some days, the venerable saint reached Killearnan, where he enjoyed a "feast of fat things" in the strength of which he went for many days, for after his return, he felt unable to attend the public means of grace.

During the winter preceding the removal of the crofting population from the south side of Strath Brora—for the north side had shortly before been cleared of its inhabitants

Adam was confined to bed, and his friends expressed

their fears that, in his delicate state of health, he could not survive the fatigue of flitting in May, when a neighbouring sheep-farmer should come into possession of the crofts and adjoining grazings. "You can keep your minds easy", said the aged saint, "for before the term-day I expect to be in that place where flittings are unknown." His presentiment proved to be correct; for he finished his earthly course in the month of March prior to the last Strath Brora "Clearances" which took place in 1820.

On the week of his death, there were cold winds accompanied by heavy showers of snow, which covered the ground with a white mantle, yet that did not prevent a large concourse of people from attending his funeral. So widely was he known, and highly esteemed by the "household of faith", that the brethren from the neighbouring parishes, and even from Tarbert, Ross, were present. The family of this good man enjoyed no little privilege in being brought up in such a home and their life gave unmistakable evidence that they derived lasting benefit from their early training. His son, Joseph, who lived in the Helmsdale district, was a very worthy man; and his daughter Margaret, who lived in Badnellan about forty years ago, is still remembered for her gentleness and beautifully consistent life.

ANGUS BAILLIE, STRATH BRORA

Near the edge of a broad, green terrace at the foot of Uarachdcoille Hill stood a Highland cottage. Until a few years ago a considerable part of the walls could be seen, but recently most of the stones were removed for protecting the banks of the Brora river where the winter floods were undermining them. Little now remains of the building but the foundation which can still be identified. On that

spot there lived for many generation a godly race of Grants or "Pronntachs" as they were locally called. The head of the last family to occupy that dwelling house there was Alexander Grant, a pious and amiable man. Now towards the end of the seventh decade of the eighteenth century, probably it was in the year 1779, this worthy man heard that the Communion was soon to be held in the parish of Creich. He had a strong desire to be present, but at the time he did not enjoy ordinary health and wished to have some fellow traveller to accompany him; for to reach the place where the sacramental services were to be held involved a journey of over twenty miles, all of which had to be done on foot, across a part of the country where no roads then existed. In the circumstances, he asked one of his sons, then a youth, to accompany him, but he was not disposed to leave home at the time. At that juncture who should happen to enter the house, but a young lad from Kilbraur. He was well built and exceedingly handsome: like the youthful shepherd of Bethlehem, he was ruddy and of a beautiful countenance. His athletic frame fitted him to become leader in games of shinty and other pastimes, in which the youth of the district sometimes took part. When he came to know how matters stood, with that amiableness and that willingness to help others which characterized him through life, he at once volunteered to go to Creich; not because religious services strongly appealed to him at the time, but because of the pleasure it gave him to accommodate his respected neighbour. But the guiding hand of the Most High was undoubtedly acting in bringing about the arrangement; for, as we shall see, it led to his conversion.

On the week of the Communion, Alex. Grant and his young attendant could be seen setting out on their journey at an early hour, while the grass was still moist with dew, and the wood through which they had to pass was vocal with the warbling of the feathered songsters. We

can follow them in thought, passing through the beautiful birch wood of Torr-soilleir and keeping along the higher part of Kilpheadairmore till they came into Strathrov, opposite Sciberscross, then occupied by a number of crofters, and so on to Strathflect. There they had to breast the rather steep Drynoch hill and walk a considerable distance beyond it, till at last they arrived at their destination in safety. The names of all the preachers who assisted the minister of Creich on that solemn occasion are not known, but one of them was Mr. Keith, the young minister of Kildonan. On the Saturday of the Communion, he conducted the Gaelic service in the open air. In the course of the sermon an arrow directed by the unerring hand of God's Spirit entered the heart of the young man from Strath Brora, and there left a wound which only the Physician of souls could heal. Such was the beginning of the Christian course of Angus Baillie, for that was the name of the young convert who afterwards became one of the best known and most respected of the "men" of Sutherland. He was then in his eighteenth year and for more than half a century he was enabled by grace to adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour in all things. After the sermon on Saturday, Angus Baillie had little or no sleep at Creich, for he realized that he was a lost sinner weighed down under a load of unforgiven guilt. On Monday at the close of the service he had to set his face homewards, but how different he found himself from what he was on the outward journey. Then he was glad to be of service to his neighbour, now he felt that he was in need of the help of the good man's prayers and counsel. Soon after, it became evident that he had undergone a very marked change. His former companions looked for him at their games, but he had more serious things to think of and in his distress of soul, he began to associate with the Lord's people. It must have greatly encouraged those who longed for the extension of God's kingdom, to see one of such

rare personal attractions taking his place in a back seat in the prayer-meeting, where often his face would be bathed with tears. For some time he continued in great distress. Though he ever conducted himself with propriety, yet when light from Heaven shone on him, what an alarming view he had of his past life ; for the sins that formerly appeared to him as motes, now rose up before him as mountains. But if at first his actual transgressions stood before him in something of their heinousness, by and by he came to know in some measure the corruption of his heart, and so terrible was the discovery that he was brought to the very verge of despair. Indeed one morning he was tempted to put an end to his life by casting himself into a deep pool in the river. He had actually reached the place and was pacing to and fro, when he was mercifully delivered from the grasp of the Tempter like a bird out of the fowler's snare. But though Angus was for a season in great bondage, yet at length a day of deliverance dawned on him, which brought him to the light and liberty of the Gospel, though it is not known what was instrumental in loosing his bonds.

Although he was not within easy reach of evangelical preachers, it was his privilege that in Strath Brora, where he lived, there were at that time a goodly number of pious men and women who lived the Gospel though they did not engage in formal preaching. In the society of such worthies he took great delight and from their wise counsel and faithful dealings he derived much spiritual benefit. There was one in particular to whom he was greatly drawn and to whom he ever felt himself to be deeply indebted—George Mackay, the pious smith of Kerrow, who took a fatherly interest in him. In after years he was always glad when he had occasion to call at the smithy on business that he might have an opportunity of spending some time with the good man in Christian conference.

He served for a time in the Army. When the 2nd Sutherland Fencibles was raised, he saw it his duty to enlist

in that regiment, and eventually became one of its most expert swordsmen. When the regiment was disbanded, Angus returned home. After his marriage, he settled in his native township of Kilbraur where he remained until the "Clearances".

A sketch of our worthy would be incomplete without some notice of the interest he took in the young, and the extraordinary influence he had over them. He encouraged them to meet in the living-room or "cearn" of his cottage where they took part in some innocent recreation for a short time; then he would say, "Now lads, come till I tell you this story". Then he would proceed to give them an account of some of the experiences of his military life, or some memorable local event that he could recall. Being very judicious, he could make use of such incidents to convey the particular moral lessons that he intended. But though some of his reminiscences were specially meant for the older lads, he could relate them in such an interesting manner as not to weary the youngest of his hearers. The gatherings concluded with devotional exercises, for all the young people were willing to remain for family worship.

What a restraining and uplifting power the meetings in Kilbraur must have proved in the case of the youth of Strath Brora! Not a few of the lads who attended them felt in after-life their indebtedness to the good man who so earnestly sought to keep their young feet from the snares of the Destroyer and to lead them to the way of holiness. A good man from Caithness—but one differently constituted from Angus—once paid him a visit in the winter season. The young people had assembled shortly before the arrival of the stranger who was almost shocked to hear the youthful voices from within, and was much surprised to find such a gathering in Kilbraur. But before the night passed, he came to view matters in a different light, once he understood what was his host's object in keeping an open door for such meetings. To the end of his

days he continued to be the friend of the young, but although charitable, he was faithful in reproofing sin in his own gentle but effective way. When he presided at a religious meeting, where a number of the young were present, he would often, for their benefit, read Ecc. 12, where there is a special exhortation addressed to them to remember their Creator in the days of their youth. To impress upon their minds the changes that accompany old age, he used to pause when he came to verse 5, "the almond tree shall flourish", and say, "if you forget the lesson here tonight, just remember Angus Baillie's hoary head".

In those days, young people were brought before the Session for what some might regard minor offences. On one occasion, three boys from Strath Brora had to appear before the Kirk Session in the old church of Clyne during the ministry of the Rev. George Mackay. Two of them were left at home one Sabbath day in charge of some cows in two adjoining fields, each boy having his own dog. Soon they were joined by another boy named Andrew Sutherland. By and by, the dogs began to fight, and, in attempting to separate them, each boy tried to hit his neighbour's dog. This led to high words and at last to blows. The result was that the three boys were cited to attend a meeting of Session, the two herds for having conducted themselves in a way so far out of keeping with the sanctity of the Lord's Day, and the other boy for not having gone to church when he was free to attend. When the two herds appeared, the Moderator, who was a strict disciplinarian, severely rebuked them. When Andrew was called, Angus Baillie got up and turning to the minister, he said, "Oh Mr. Mackay, poor Andrew has confessed his fault, and I give you my word that you shall never see him again for such a cause". Afterwards Angus said to Andrew, "Now my dear boy, you know that I have to-day come under promise to the minister on your behalf, and if you do any-

thing amiss, you see I shall be placed in a very undesirable position". The words left an indelible impression on the heart of that boy. As a young lad, he gave evidence of being a subject of grace and developed into a very interesting Christian. He was Andrew Sutherland, better known as *Anndra na Geàrr-choille*. Till the end of his long life he could never forget the words of his revered friend.

On another occasion, when the family at Kilbraur were gathered around the family altar to engage in the worship of God, at the close of which it was customary for the good wife to lay the fire before retiring to rest, the head of the household instead of following the usual practice, began to gather the embers which were smouldering on the hearth, on which he forthwith piled an armful of peats. His worthy partner looked on in astonishment, and asked what he meant by replenishing the fire at such an hour. "Oh I expect", was his reply, "that before the peats are consumed, one of the Lord's people will come who may be in sore need of a good fire." As the peats blazed up and cast a cheering light through the low roofed apartment, a footstep was heard outside and, passing through the unbarred door, there entered a young man with dripping garments. The visitor was recognized and cordially welcomed, for he was none other than Sandy Gair, who in great distress of mind, had crossed Loch Brora at the narrow channel near Killein and made for the house of this godly family. The exercised young man after explaining the cause of his visit at such an untimely hour, received every attention from his hospitable friends who vied with each other in ministering to his wants; and, though the outward comforts provided for him must have been particularly acceptable after his drenching in the loch, even more enjoyable was the sweet fellowship he had with his Christian friends in speaking of that kingdom which consisteth not in meat and drink, but in righteousness, and

peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Sandy never forgot the night he spent in Kilbraur and frequently referred to it as the happiest night of his life.

Prior to the induction of the Rev. Geo. Mackay in Clyne, Angus seldom went to hear Mr. Ross in the parish church. He preferred to cross the shoulder of Ben Horn to Golspie to be feasted under the teaching of the godly Mr. Gunn. When that eminent preacher was called to his rest, he was succeeded by Mr. Keith of Kildonan, so that Angus had an opportunity of sitting under his spiritual father. He continued to worship in Golspie church till the death of Mr. Keith in 1817. As he occupied a prominent place among the Friday speakers at sacramental occasions, he attended many Communion in Ross and even as far afield as Inverness-shire. Along with some of the Baillies of Coiraghascaig and John Cuthbert of Golspie, he went all the way to distant Lochcarron, at a time when there were no roads to the West, to attend the Communion services there during the ministry of the famous Mr. Lachlan Mackenzie. It is said that on a Sabbath prior to the dispensation of the ordinance, Mr. Lachlan had a presentiment which he expressed from the pulpit, that they were to have some very notable additions to their speakers at the Fellowship meeting. The Strath Brora men were called one after the other to speak on the following Friday.

After the "Clearances", Angus moved to Rhearachar in the parish of Dornoch, where he remained for a few years; and there, as in his native strath, he was held in the highest esteem by the whole community. The following reminiscence may show the deference which was paid to him. On the morning of one of the week days of the Communion he observed a neighbour busily engaged in cutting turf. Angus went to him, and, on ascertaining that it was his intention to continue at his work, and not to attend public worship, he asked if the spade was sharp. The other handed him the spade, which he coolly

shouldered, and proceeded to move towards the man's house where he placed it against the wall. Turning to his neighbour, who had followed, he said in his own gentle way, "Now Neil, see to it in the future, when the worship of God is publicly held in the parish and you are in health, you do not absent yourself unless you have to engage in some work of necessity or mercy". While he continued in Rhearachar, he kept a meeting in his house on Sabbath evenings which was well attended. From Rhearachar he returned to his native parish where he was appointed to the office of catechist. He got a small croft in Badnellan, where he spent the rest of his life. In his new home he was again in close proximity to a few of his old Strath Brora friends; for at the "Clearances" a number of the evicted families from that valley were huddled together on the bare moorland of Badnellan.

Angus Baillie was a man greatly beloved by high and low. He had a most winsome personality; for in addition to his natural attractions, in him the beauty of holiness was exhibited in a most engaging form. Probably none of the "men" of his generation in Sutherland was such a favourite with old and young. To the young he endeared himself in a remarkable way. Indeed so much were they drawn to him that it gave many of them unfeigned pleasure to have an opportunity of serving him. Young lads and even boys were delighted to have a share in cutting, carting or stacking his peats or attending to his small croft. Perhaps some may be interested to know that his favourite Psalm tune was "Old Elgin", which, with its many grace-notes, is very impressive. He was not long laid aside. Near the beginning of his illness, the well-known George Caider of the same parish called to see him and found him resting on a low bed. Angus, looking at his legs, addressed them thus:—"You have been good servants to me, for you have often carried me to the public means of grace". The good man finished his course in 1834 aged 74 years. Not since

the departure of the godly Mr. John Graham was there grief so general and so poignant in the parish as was caused by the demise of this saintly man. It must have been touching to notice how the young were affected, for among them could be seen clear evidence of deep sorrow. One that remembered the burial, worthy David Lawson, a native of the parish, and for many years an elder in Free St. Columba Church, Edinburgh, remembered how the day was kept like a sacramental Fast-day, for work was suspended throughout the parish, save perhaps on one or two farms. Practically all the male population who were in health, including schoolboys, attended the funeral; while many came from neighbouring parishes to show their respect for the deceased. As the long procession moved along silently in military fashion, carrying the coffin shoulder high, groups of women and children were gathered on hillocks that commanded a view of the road to the graveyard. Thus amidst such tokens of sincere mourning were the mortal remains of Angus Baillie committed to their resting place. The parishioners erected a chaste tombstone with a suitable inscription to mark his grave. His widow, a very pious woman, survived him for nearly thirty years.

JOHN SUTHERLAND, STRATH BRORA

John Sutherland, or "MacTheàrlaich", as he was better known in his native parish, lived in Badan Fliuch, a small croft in the heights above Gordonbush. Though he had not such an attractive personality as some of the outstanding "men" of Strath Brora—for his features were somewhat plain, and his manner rather stern—yet for strength of intellect, soundness of judgment, faithfulness in reproving sin, and weight of Christian character, he was second to none of them.

He and the famous Angus Baillie were united in bonds of closest friendship, though they were as different in disposition, as they were unlike in personal appearance, and were inseparable companions on many a journey to sacramental services. They were present at a Communion in Tain shortly after the settlement of the Rev. Angus Mackintosh. On the morning of the Fellowship Meeting, a great concourse of people was assembled in the old graveyard beside St. Duthus Church, and among them could be seen these two worthies from Strath Brora seated together on a flat tombstone. They were not known to Mr. Mackintosh, who presided, but their names occurred in a list of the speakers present which was handed to him by one of his elders. As the exercises of the day proceeded, Angus Baillie was asked to speak to the Question. When he arose in the congregation, the minister was at once struck by his handsome appearance and neat attire, and was most favourably impressed by his weighty remarks. After Angus had resumed his seat, the name of John Sutherland was called. When Mr. Mackintosh noticed a rather rugged-featured and seemingly austere man standing up (immediately after the last attractive speaker) he at first concluded he had made a mistake in calling such a man ; but he had only uttered a few words when the minister's attention was arrested, and his eyes were fixed on him as he listened to his profound thoughts so felicitously expressed and so solemnly delivered. He began then to reproach himself for his hasty judgment, for he readily admitted that in setting forth the fruits of saving grace, he at least equalled, if he did not excel, the moving speaker who had preceded him. This worthy man lived near to his God, and was privileged to have not a little of the "secret of the Lord".

He was once conducting worship in a house where death had entered. Among those who were present to show their sympathy with the sorrowing family, was a

young soldier, who was home on furlough. He was in uniform, which then included a high leather stock worn around the neck for holding the head upright. At the close of the devotions, John stated that the most erect head in the room would soon be laid low. The soldier was then in perfect health, but shortly afterwards took ill, and in a few days passed away.

After the death of the Rev. Alex. Urquhart, Rogart, some clerical members of Presbytery, probably for family considerations, made an effort to get his son, who was then ready for licence, settled in the charge. The young man was seemingly of a different type from his father, and as a preacher, he was not the choice of the congregation in general. But after the funeral, the elders—good but unsophisticated men—under pressure from some of the ministers present, were prevailed upon to give at least tacit consent to the proposed arrangement. When John Sutherland was informed of what had taken place in Rogart—for it may be stated that young Mr. Urquhart received and accepted the presentation to that parish—he remarked that although the Rogart elders were pious men, yet they erred in acquiescing in the method adopted for filling up the vacancy, and that he firmly believed the parish of Rogart would not be blessed with a Gospel ministry while any of them were spared. It was worthy of notice that the last survivor of the elders—the venerable John Sutherland, Clagin Unie, was called to his rest a few months before the induction of the godly Mr. Alexander Macleod, as the first Free Church minister of Rogart.

As a proof of John's keen discernment, and of the confidence the people of his native parish had in his judgment, it may be mentioned that when a stranger appeared in the pulpit of Clyne, the place that was assigned to him as a preacher by some in the congregation, and particularly by the young, was largely determined by the attitude of John Sutherland in public worship. During the sermon

the eyes of many of the young would turn once again from the pulpit to the elders' pew where John sat. If he enjoyed the service, his countenance and the nodding of his head would make that known. If he was dissatisfied with the teaching, he became restless, and would take hold of his broad blue bonnet; but if he heard anything that was glaringly unscriptural, he would don his headgear in the way of practical protest, and would then walk out of church. The youth of the congregation always considered that the orthodoxy of the preacher was above suspicion when the blue bonnet was not in evidence during the delivery of the sermon. The exact date of his death cannot now be ascertained, though it probably took place in the early thirties of last century. He had a daughter, Lucy, a worthy woman, who survived her father many years.

THE BAILLIES OF COIR-AN-SCAIG, STRATH BRORA

Coir-an-scaig lies well on the slope of the hill that gently rises above the meadow lands of Carrol. It is, roughly speaking, about half a mile to the south side of Loch Brora. Though Coir-an-scaig is now without a single human inhabitant, yet the sites of primitive cottages with the marks of curiously shaped rigs or "lazy beds" which can be seen on its grassy face, point to a time when crofters lived there. Perhaps there is no place name in Strath Brora that was more widely known a century ago among the good people of Sutherland than Coir-an-Scaig, for it was then the home of a most remarkable family of Baillies, whose members, without exception, were eminently godly, and whose name is still fragrant in the district. Indeed, the old natives can scarcely yet hear the name Coir-an-scaig without thinking or referring to the worthies who were tenants there more than four-score years ago.

The head of this family—Hugh Baillie—was one whose

saintly life gave conclusive proof that he sought a city "whose builder and maker is God" and his amiable wife and worthy son George lived with him "as heirs of the same promise". Hugh was a man of a singularly gentle and lovable nature, thoroughly transparent, and much under the influence of the charity that thinketh no evil.

He seemingly had not the lively imagination or animated delivery of some of his contemporaries, yet he was a most impressive speaker, and, latterly, on account of his years and ripe experience, he was usually one of the first Strath Brora "men" to be called at Fellowship meetings. It was an inspiration to see him rise on a Communion Friday. His venerable appearance, his solemn and subdued manner, and even the quiet flow of his address, always so fresh and savoury, drew upon him the eyes of hundreds in the congregation and sustained their attention until he sat down. One of the outstanding features of this good man was his unaffected humility, which imparted a peculiar attractiveness to his other excellencies. So low was his esteem of himself, that, it is said, he sometimes asked his wife or his pious son when comparatively young, to lead in prayer at family worship. Once at a bi-monthly Question-meeting in the Church of Clyne, our worthy was one of the first that the minister who presided, called upon to speak, but with characteristic modesty he declined to take part, when he saw so many other eminent men present. The minister, however, would take no refusal and said to him at last, "Rise, Hugh, or I must get young George your son to take your place".

Hugh Baillie was one of a company of worthies from Strath Brora who were in the habit of attending the Communion services in Lochcarron. They had to walk all the way, and, though they chose the shortest possible course through mountain passes and across trackless moors, they must have taken the greater part of a week to accomplish the journey. The first time Hugh and his companions went

to Lochcarron they were overtaken by Mr. Lachlan—as the eminent minister of that parish was familiarly named—mounted on a Highland pony—on his way home. Earlier in the day, he had come across a party of drovers, either on their way to or from market, who were loudly discussing the price of cattle, but their talk not proving congenial to him, without much loss of time he moved on. By and by, he observed the Strath Brora men, and when he got within ear-shot, he found that they, too, were speaking, and that in a most edifying way, about a market at which, not cattle and sheep, but Gospel blessings can be bought “without money and without price”. With the high spiritual tone of their conversation he was greatly delighted, and having ascertained that they were on their way to the Communion, and with a view to calling on them to take part in the Fellowship meeting, he, without revealing his purpose, took a note of their names. The strangers had less hesitation in giving the desired information, as they never suspected that the rider, who as usual, wore a capacious cloak of home-spun cloth, was the great minister of Lochcarron, for they had never seen him before.

Mr. Lachlan, being anxious to reach home as quickly as possible, soon left the men. On his way, he called at a house where travellers sometimes rested and refreshed themselves, and, having seen the landlady, he told her that he had passed a company of nobles who were to dine at her house that day. She was not a little disconcerted to hear that such visitors were to patronize her humble hostelry, and expressed her fears that she had no suitable fare to set before any of the nobility. “Oh, my good woman”, said Mr. Lachlan, “you may keep your mind easy, for the travellers belong to the nobles of Israel and are humble to a degree. I wish you to take them in when they arrive and to entertain them at my expense.” After the travellers had reached their destination, they were surprised to discover that the rider with the rough tweed cloak

and the far-famed Mr. Lachlan were one and the same person. At the Fellowship Meeting, after the Question had been opened, Mr. Lachlan who presided, said:—"My friends, we read that certain wise men from the East came to Bethlehem to enquire for the promised Messiah, and I believe there have come wise men from the East to our Communion to seek for the Saviour, so we shall hear what they have to say." As the congregation were on the tip-toe of expectation, he produced his list of speakers and called the Sutherland men one after the other. These Strath Brora men found the teaching of Mr. Lachlan so refreshing that for several years, they not only endeavoured to be present at Lochcarron, but often followed him to other parishes as far distant as Inverness, where he assisted on sacramental occasions. Sometimes they spent several successive weeks in attending Communions, but their absence from home did not entail any temporal loss; living as they did in a quiet pastoral district, the other members of the family and even sympathetic neighbours, saw to it that their cattle and small patches of land were attended to in their absence. In their own parish church they got so little to refresh their souls that they availed themselves of every opportunity of hearing the pure evangel.

On their return journey from the West, they spent much of the time in recalling the striking statements of their favourite preachers, and delighted to repeat many of the choice sayings of Mr. Lachlan and others to their friends who were not privileged to hear them direct from the lips of those preachers; and, so retentive were their memories, that they were able to reproduce whole "table" addresses many weeks after they had been delivered. A number of these addresses were committed to writing by a godly young man, who, at that time, was teacher in Strath Brora—the well-known Thomas Ross. After his death, his manuscripts were handed over by his son to Dr. Kennedy who gave them to the public in a booklet entitled

“*Dioghluim bho Theagasgan nan Aithrichean*”. “Gleanings from the Teachings of the Fathers.”)

Some of the Sutherland worthies in travelling to Lochcarron, found food and shelter in the shielings or herd men's booths which they passed on their way through the uplands of Ross-shire. One of these men was once benighted as he reached the shielings of the Lochcarron crofters, far up in the hills. Directing his footsteps to one of these turf huts, he was kindly received by the occupant, a man who belonged to Mr. Lachlan's congregation. On the morrow, which happened to be the Wednesday preceding the Communion, the traveller tried to persuade his host to accompany him to the solemn services that were in prospect, but in this he failed. So he set out alone, arriving in Lochcarron shortly before mid-day, in time to see some of the people repairing to church to attend the preparatory prayer-meeting (for in those days it was an almost universal rule in the northern counties to have a prayer-meeting at noon on the Wednesday before the Fast Day). He gladly joined the worshippers and was called by the minister to lead in prayer. At the close of the meeting, Mr. Lachlan asked him what sort of religion they had in Sutherland. “Is it”, he enquired, “the religion of the head or of the pocket?” “Oh, it is neither”, was the reply, “for the religion we have in Sutherland is simply this—from hand to mouth.” The answer so pleased Mr. Lachlan that he invited him to the manse and led him into his own sitting-room. The housekeeper, having noticed that the man's shoes were powdered with dust, demurred at his presence in the room; but only a few minutes later, as she was engaged in the kitchen, a kettle overturned and poured its hot contents on her feet. Mr. Lachlan regarded this as a rebuke for her unsympathetic treatment of the pious stranger.

Hugh Baillie came to the grave in full age “like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season”.

His wife was one of the most outstanding Christian women in her day, on the east side of the country. In kindliness of disposition and depth of piety, she was not inferior to her husband, and like him, she seemed to have been favoured with much of the mind of the Most High. On one occasion, two or three youths were passing through Strath Brora below her house. The good woman noticed them and insisted on their having some refreshment before proceeding further, stating at the same time that something serious was near them. Her impressions proved to be true, for in attempting to ford the narrow channel which connects two parts of Loch Brora near Carrol Rock, some of the young lads were drowned.

George, the only child of this excellent couple, followed in the footsteps of his godly parents. He appeared to have felt the power of saving grace at an early age. In his religious training he was exceptionally favoured, for not only did he come under home influences greatly fitted for fostering true piety, but he enjoyed rare opportunities of associating with the many outstanding saints in the neighbourhood, at whose feet he considered it a privilege to sit. Brought up in such an atmosphere, he developed into a most beautiful Christian character, while little more than a youth. The high place which he got from the "men" of his native Strath shows that he must have impressed them by his genuine humility as well as by his unaffected godliness, for the fathers of Sutherland in those days were too judicious to bring forward the young men, no matter what their gifts might be, in whom they saw no signs of modesty.

Some years after the "Clearances", George Baillie emigrated to North America, where by his holy life, he continued to adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour. One day, it is affirmed, he had occasion to go to a place some distance from his new home. On his return, he completely lost his way in the pathless forest. In his helplessness, he

had recourse to prayer, and when he rose from his knees, he saw a strange dog approaching and fawning upon him and then moving in a certain direction. He followed the sagacious animal until at last he came in sight of his own log cabin.

REV. HUGH MACKENZIE, M.A., CLYNE

Rev. Hugh Mackenzie, who succeeded Mr. W. Ross in Clyne, was the youngest son of the well-known Hugh Mackenzie, catechist, Creich. He was born in Pulrossie, but at an early age was brought under the care of his uncle, Rev. William Mackenzie, Tongue. Like many of the students from the North, he attended King's College, Aberdeen, where he graduated M.A. He also took the ordinary medical course, and the knowledge he thereby acquired, proved to be very beneficial to the sick in the several parishes in which he laboured, more especially as in some of them there was no resident doctor. He was admitted as Minister of Assynt in 1817 and later was translated to Clyne where he was inducted in 1825.

Mr. Sage's references to him are highly complimentary. He writes—"Dr. Hugh Mackenzie was a man of gentlemanly and winning manners; he was well educated and most accomplished in ancient and modern learning, and of a very amiable disposition. His pulpit ministrations were clear expositions of scripture doctrine and specimens of finished composition both in English and Gaelic." The people of Clyne were much attached to him: indeed taking him all round, he was perhaps one of the most popular of the ministers who were settled in that parish during the reign of patronage. When any of his hearers spoke of Dr. Mackenzie, as he was always called, it was invariably in terms not merely of respect, but of affection. Unlike some of his predecessors, he was a companion of them that feared the Lord, irrespective of their social position, for

he took delight in the fellowship of saints. When some of the "men" from other parishes visited him, it gave him great pleasure to have them for the night. An old woman who as a young girl was a maid in the manse, often recalled a time when Sandy Gair and Angus Baillie (who was then living in Dornoch) had called to see her master, and remained until the following day; and she loved to tell how greatly honoured she felt in being asked to lead these worthies to their bedrooms. John Cuthbert, the eminent catechist of Golspie, was a special favourite of Dr. Mackenzie. Once when they happened to be together, they spoke of the uncertainty of life. "How do you think of the nearness of death?" John asked his friend. "Well", said the other, "I so view it, that when I dress in the morning, another may undress me" and so it happened that that was what took place in his own case. "Now John, let me hear what you have to say" was the next question. "I sometimes feel", was the answer, "that when I exhale my breath, I may not again inhale it." "Oh John", said the minister, "you were always in advance of me, and I find you are ahead of me still."

Through the influence of Sir George Sinclair of Ulbster he got a presentation to the parish of Killin in Perthshire. His removal from Clyne was keenly felt by the whole body of the people.

In returning from Kenmore, where he had preached on a sacramental Fast-day, his horse took fright and he was thrown out of the trap and carried in a state of insensibility to the manse and died that night in the forty-eighth year of his age and the eighteenth of his ministry.

GEORGE CALDER, CLYNE

George Calder was born in Glasgow in 1805. His father, a godly man, was a soldier. His mother, whose maiden name was Graham, belonged to Gruids, Lairg.

When George was seven years of age, the regiment was sent to India. There he got in touch with Hindu boys and one Sabbath he was induced by his swarthy companions to join them in fishing on that day. When he came home, he left the fish at the foot of the stair leading to the room which his parents occupied, that he might find a place to hide his catch from his father, but when he afterwards looked for the fish, he found that a pig had eaten them. That was the first and last time that he ever engaged in Sabbath fishing. On returning from abroad, his father died at Chatham. His widowed mother came north to her native country and settled in Brora. When a youth, the work of a blacksmith appealed to him and he was sent to Dornoch to serve his apprenticeship. As a young journeyman, he was employed in Kintradwell, not many miles from his mother's house. It was there he received his first serious impressions. He was one day carrying live coals from his master's house to kindle the smithy fire when the latter said to him, "You are to have enough of fire here, at any rate, whether you are to have as much in the hereafter, I can't say". That remark went as an arrow to his heart, but his concern gradually wore away, yet it returned again so far that he began to read to his mother at worship. But he had a craze for dancing and would sometimes go out at a late hour at night with light company. One night he was very late in coming home, and when about to take part in family worship, his mother said to him how could he dare to open God's word who had come in at such an hour. He never stayed out again for such a cause. He continued more or less to follow the means of grace, and would even engage in prayer. Indeed he was regarded by many as a pious young man and looked on himself as such. Yet he was only a self-righteous Pharisee. He remained for some time in this state till he attended Creich Communion and there, under the searching preaching of the Rev. John Kennedy,

Killearnan, his self-righteousness was swept away. He was then brought into deep waters and his law work was very severe and protracted. His contemporaries used to relate that they remembered distinctly how he used to steal into the old church of Clyne, as if he were a thief, and make his way into an obscure pew, and very often in such distress of mind that he would rise and slip out before the end of the service. His convictions were so alarming that his Christian friends became anxious about him, and some of them were wont to go out after him, lest he should disturb his fellow-worshippers. So harassed was he by the assaults of the Tempter that sometimes he could not read the Word of God, for when he turned to the Bible for consolation, he saw, to use his own words, "the sparks of hell" coming between him and the sacred book. But when his bonds were unloosed and the light of the Gospel shone into his heart he had extraordinary uplifting of soul. For some time he rejoiced in walking in the light of God's favour, but a few years after his first deliverance, he was made to pass again through great soul trouble. What now weighed him down was not so much the fear that the change he had undergone was not a work of grace, but the subtle temptation that a holy God could not justly pardon such a sinner as he. The intensity of his mental distress was such that it left its mark on his facial appearance for life. He had been known to tell that he sometimes felt as if a spirit of blasphemy were taking possession of all the members of his body. Once he was so hard pressed in trying to prevent the stream of profane scoffing at the Most High from escaping his lips, that he struck his hand on his mouth so forcibly that he broke three of his teeth. He continued for some time in bondage, after he had at first tasted that the Lord is gracious, when the Most High had been pleased to hide from him the light of His countenance; but when in His great goodness He restored to him the joy of His salvation, George was like one transported

to the third heavens, and, though reticent about his ecstasy of soul, when God turned back his captivity, he had been known to state, that he heard the voice of the Triune Godhead sealing his eternal salvation. His ravishing experience of Divine love was as great a tax on his bodily strength as his former convictions.

Dr. Kennedy was very desirous that some of George's experiences should be recorded for the edification of exercised persons. George was not in many respects a type of the Sutherland "men". For one thing, he did not possess their power of condensation or their striking originality. As a Friday speaker he had not the popular gifts to attract the crowds, for his voice was weak, and he occupied more time than most of the Northern men; but as he was intellectually clean and thoughtful, his remarks were always instructive and, owing to his deep experience, he was peculiarly acceptable to the Lord's people. Indeed for the last fifteen or twenty years of his life there were few of the "men" of Sutherland that exercised Christians in that county preferred to hear. Many of them have been struck with the way in which they heard their case so minutely described by him in prayer, or at the Fellowship Meeting.

In stature he was noticeably under the ordinary height and was slimly built, and, on account of this, he was often familiarly referred to as "An Gobhann beag" (or "the little smith"). His dark sparkling eye evinced the fire of an active mind. He was of a very lively disposition and when he became the subject of Divine grace, this made him all the more attractive. He passed to his rest on the 16th September, 1889, aged 84.

ANGUS MUNRO, CLYNE

One that held a high position in the regard of discerning people, though he was low in his own eyes, was Angus Munro, North Brora. In his early years, it seems he was

a stranger to the exercise of the Psalmist when he felt his iniquities as "an heavy burden", for young Angus was for a time, full of fun and frolic. He learned his trade as a shoemaker in Golspie, where he had as companions in the same village the famous Alex. Gair, who worked as a joiner, and Alex. Grant, afterwards Catechist of Creich, who was then an apprentice tailor. None of the trio at that time gave much promise of being closely associated with the Lord's cause, though their moral conduct was above reproach. The three frequently clubbed together after working hours and were fond of playing innocent tricks on the villagers. It is not known what led Angus to give serious consideration to eternal realities, but the change that he had undergone was apparent to all. His gravity of manner, his weanedness from the world, his tenderness of conscience and his humble walk with his God, early showed that he had become a new creature and that in his case, "old things had passed away". Of him it was true that he had much of the pilgrim spirit, for his affections were set on "the things that are above". He was pre-eminently a man of prayer. It was no unusual thing for him to rise from his shoemaker's seat and retire to his prayer-closet. His private devotions often continued to the early morning. Owing to his prolonged vigils he often appeared to be asleep in public worship. Yet it was said that he could recall more of the sermon than many who were wide awake.

He was sometimes in rather straitened circumstances but he knew where to apply for help, which came not infrequently in unforeseen ways. On one occasion he was in a company that were on their way to a Communion, somewhere beyond the Little Ferry. At the time he had not sufficient money to pay the ferryman. As the passengers were waiting for the boat, Angus was digging his staff into the sand and when he withdrew it, he found a coin which was sufficient for meeting his wants.

Angus happened one day to be behind his house, when he was giving audible expression to his meditations. Unknown to him, a pious youth, George Grant—the son of a neighbour and afterwards an elder in the Free Church congregation of Clyne—overheard the good man saying, “Is Tu an Dia muileach”. (“Thou art the dear God.”) The young boy, only then in his teens, was so much touched when he heard the words that he gave Angus part of the little money that he then possessed. Angus had very much of the spirit of Bunyan’s Mr. Fearing, for though he gave clear evidence that his conversation was in Heaven, and his treasures there, it was only a comparatively short time before his demise that he became a communicant. He was gathered to his fathers in 1852.

ROBERT HAMILTON, CLYNE¹

Robert Hamilton lived next door to the godly Angus Munro, but was a man of a very different type. He was a regular soldier and retired from his regiment, the 71st Foot, with a pension. After his discharge, he married and lived in North Brora, where he had a small croft. While he served in the Army and for some time after his return to civil life, he manifested no particular interest in spiritual things. One Sabbath afternoon when his wife and neighbours were in Church, Robert, though in ordinary health, was resting on his bed with his children in the same room. As he was thus whiling away the Lord’s day, a passage

¹ At one time Clyne was the only parish in the County where Hamiltons were to be found, but some families of that name have lived there for generations. This lowland surname in Gaelic is “Lam” whose initial letter is pronounced like the unaspirated “L” in the Gaelic word “Lamb” (hand). Probably the Hamiltons and the Melvilles of Clyne—the Gaelic form of which is “Lelin” came North at the opening of the coal pit, for the natives then had no knowledge of mining. It appears the existence of coal in Brora was known as early as 1529.

of Scripture came with extraordinary power before his mind. The fetters of his indifference by which he had been so long bound were broken off as by a stroke, and the glory of the Redeemer was so revealed to him, that his heart was captivated and he was enabled to close with Him Whom he now saw to be "fairer than the sons of men". His soul was now filled with delight in religious exercises. He thus, in the initial part of his Christian course, differed from many of the eminent men of the North, who were made to pass through trying conviction ere they attained to the liberty of the Gospel. But if Robert entered the church militant by the South door, he passed out as we shall see by the North door (according to the movement of the people through the temple of Ezekiel).

He was well known at Communion from Caithness to Inverness-shire, for his pension made it easier for him to be away from home than for some of his brethren who had no such means of support, while his strong frame and his military training served him in good stead on many a long journey to Gospel ordinances. At Inverness he once heard the famous Donald Cattanach, Newtonmore, then a young man, and though in many respects there was such a contrast between the two, Cattanach, must have left on him no ordinary impression, for he had been known to remark that in some respects, he was one of the most remarkable men that he had ever listened to. Having a powerful voice and a ready and lively delivery, Robert was attentively listened to at Fellowship Meetings. A worthy elder heard him at the famous Burn of Ferintosh more than seventy years ago, and he had a vivid recollection of how when he warmed up, he emphasised his points by coming down with his ponderous hand on the back of the man who sat on the form in front of him. As one might expect, his illustrations savoured of the army. He frequently stressed the duty of professing people to stand up bravely on the Lord's side like a good soldier and not to

be satisfied in opposing the forces of evil with a weapon as harmless as a sword of straw. But though he had popular gifts as a Friday speaker, his words were not always comforting to tender Christians, for he was apt to make a standard for others of his own experience. He attached very great importance to a professing Christian being able to state definitely when he had undergone a saving change. Conversion, he often referred to as a marriage covenant, and, making use of that figure, he would ask, "Is it not passing strange that any married woman should not be able to produce her marriage certificate?"

But though he could recall the very day when he had been turned from darkness to light, he may unwittingly have caused some that the Lord was pleased to deal with in a different way, to write bitter things against themselves, seeing their case resembled that of the great covenanting preacher John Livingstone who records, "I do not remember the time or means particularly whereby the Lord at first wrought upon my heart".

But though this good man walked for years under a serene sky, at last clouds began to gather. One Communion Friday after the close of the Fellowship Meeting at Rogart, a judicious Christian said to some of his friends, "Surely something is to happen to Robert Hamilton, for did you notice that the marriage-certificate was not in evidence". Robert went home and did not again venture beyond the bounds of his native parish. For about three years he was more or less under a cloud, and was often so cast down that he considered himself unworthy of being visited by any of the Lord's people, and wondered that any of them should take the least notice of him, but "at evening time there was light". One of his neighbours, godly George Grant, had a dream in which he saw Dr. Kennedy, Dingwall, who enquired of him as to the state of Robert's mind. George replied that he was still rather distressed.

"Oh yes", said Dr. Kennedy, "but in eight days Robert will be quite well". The dream naturally made an impression on George, and he took note of the time to which reference had been made. In the case of Robert, the clouds began to move away and on the eighth day after the dream, he was called to his everlasting rest. He finished his course on 5th June, 1866, at the age of 78 years.

WILLIAM MURRAY, CLYNE

William Murray, Bruach Robie, was greatly esteemed, not only in his native parish but wherever he was known. He was of a placid spirit, kindly in his manner and humble in his walk. As a Friday speaker he was most savoury. He was no stranger to the exercises of the "Mourners in Zion" who found in him "a son of consolation". His own deep experience enabled him to describe minutely their feelings, and to deal very gently with them in giving the marks of the subjects of saving grace; for he was always careful not to hurt the "contrite ones". His well-chosen words, coming from a tender heart, were uttered with such weight and unction, that they were singularly impressive and often proved to be as balm to a painful wound. Once at a Fellowship Meeting at Dornoch, the question was based on Isaiah 40, 31—"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles". Some of the speakers were dwelling on the flight of the believer as he ascends on the wings of faith and hope. When William was called, he remarked that there are times when some of the Lord's people cannot soar as the eagle, for they may feel themselves more like a roughly-treated dove with draggled plumage and bruised wings and its feet fixed in the mire so that it cannot rise as it desires to do. When Dr.

Kennedy, Dingwall, then a young man, closed the Question, he took particular notice of William's illustration and said that the man whose case was represented by the sorely harassed dove was one that had made no mean flight in Christian experience.

William was removed to the "house of many mansions" on 30th August, 1860, at the age of 66 years. He had two sons who were elders in the Free Church, viz.—John in Golspie, and Turnbull—who was better known as "Bellan", the Gaelic form of the name—in Rogart, where he became a member of Kirk Session during the ministry of the godly Mr. Alex. Macleod. Another son William, who was a miller in Skelbo, although not an office-bearer, was not behind his brothers in weight of Christian character.

THOMAS ROSS, CLYNE

In the part of the parish called the Doll, there were not a few living epistles who were "known and read of all men". Chief among these was Thomas Ross, who for more than forty years was engaged in teaching the youth of that district. It appears that in his boyhood he had chosen the "good part". When he was still a minor, he had charge of a school in Kilbraur, Strath Brora, which was entirely supported by the local people. His predecessor was the meek and saintly William Ross, afterwards for many years in Broadhaven, who, it seems, was the first schoolmaster on that side of Strath Brora. After the "Clearances", Thomas returned to the Doll, of which he was a native, and there he acted in a similar capacity. At the Disruption, he was appointed Free Church Schoolmaster in the Doll.

Though a strict disciplinarian, he was greatly respected

by his pupils in general, and, as one might expect, he attached much importance to religious instruction. In addition to the elementary subjects, he took great pains in getting the young under his charge to make use of the Bible in their mother-tongue, and so well did he succeed that his scholars were notable for the facility with which they could read Gaelic books. His authority was not confined to the schoolroom but extended throughout the whole district; for he left his impress in a very noticeable form upon the community. The people of the Doll were remarkable for their decorum on the way to and from the house of God. It was then a thing almost unknown to see a man from the Doll lighting his pipe on his return from Public Worship till he had walked on a very considerable distance from church; indeed some who used the "weed" refrained from smoking till they had reached their homes. Not a little of the outward propriety that characterized the people of that district could be traced to the influence of the godly schoolmaster.

He was a very capable precentor and had a thorough hold of all the Long Gaelic Psalm tunes—six in number—to which he was very partial; indeed he never used any other tunes in Public Worship, when the service was conducted in Gaelic. This good man was gathered to his fathers on 25th April, 1865, at the age of 69 years. He was interred in Golspie Churchyard, the burial place of his ancestors, where his pupils erected a tombstone to his memory with a suitable inscription. His wife, a godly woman, survived him about twenty years. Some of his sons who died in early manhood gave clear evidence of sincere piety. His son John reached old age. He was a kind of herbalist, and on that account he was often referred to as Dr. Ross in the West coast of Sutherland where he lived for more than twenty years. His prescriptions were known to have been instrumental in curing some invalids. John, though a somewhat nervous and rather excitable

person, was a tender-hearted and exercised Christian. His predictions of some future events proved to be correct, though at the time when he expressed them, it did not appear that they could be true.

Several instances might be adduced in support of this, but let the following suffice. On one occasion, a boat with a crew from Tarbert crossed to Stornoway for salt. The day was very fine when they left, but some time after, there arose one of the most terrific storms of wind and snow, that the oldest people could remember. The next day, which was Sabbath, the tempest continued, though with less violence. On Monday, John happened to be in one of the houses in Tarbert where he seemed to be unusually bright and was almost disposed to joke. At last one of the household said to him, "I am greatly surprised that you can be so cheerful when we are afraid the boat is lost". John replied, "If the boat was not moored beside Stornoway pier at 8 o'clock on the day she sailed, I am not very hopeful of the safety of the men, but I'm not to say more".

On Tuesday, John said to a youth in the house, "Go up, George, to that eminence, and you will see the boat coming on between Stoer Head and this township". The lad did so and came back with the glad news that the boat was in sight. On their arrival, the crew reported that they had a most favourable passage to Stornoway where they arrived on the stroke of 8 o'clock, but that shortly afterwards the blizzard broke out in all its fury.

JOHN ROSS, CLYNE

John Ross was a very sincere and attractive Christian. He was of a mild disposition, very unassuming and pre-eminently a lover of good men. His retentive memory

was richly stored with reminiscences of the past, many of which have perished. Probably very few in his day had a better knowledge of the religious history of his native parish. It was both interesting and instructive to hear him as he recalled certain of the striking sayings of the fathers, or recalled some of his own recollections of remarkable Communion, for he took great delight in attending sacramental services in various parishes when he found it practicable to do so. He used to tell of a memorable Communion in Dornoch at which he was present. That summer had been exceptionally dry and the crops were beginning to suffer from lack of rain. On the Sabbath morning, the clouds were lowering and drops of rain began to fall at the commencement of the Gaelic service in the open air, and it threatened to be a downpour. Mr. Kennedy, the saintly minister of Killearnan, was the preacher, and in the opening prayer he pleaded most earnestly, that if it were in accordance with the Lord's will the bottles of Heaven might be stopped while they were engaged in His own blessed work. As the man of God continued to pray, the clouds began to dispel, and after that, not a drop fell while the prolonged service lasted. But in a spiritual sense, the Lord was pleased to send down a plentiful rain which was the means of refreshing His weary heritage, for some felt on that day as if the very windows of Heaven had been opened and enriching blessings poured down to revive their fainting souls. In the closing prayer, the minister acknowledged the goodness of the Most High in granting such outward comfort to the people during the services of the day, and then he besought the Lord that if it were agreeable to His Divine mind, copious showers might come down to water the parched earth. Sure enough, ere the more distant of the congregation had reached their homes, the rain came down in drenching torrents.

GEORGE GUNN GRANT, CLYNE

George G. Grant was a native of North Brora. In his early life he turned his face Zionward, when other young lads were looking for pleasure in the company of "persons vain". George, while still a youth, found special enjoyment in the society of his godly neighbour, Angus Munro. Much of his spare time was passed with that excellent man, whose life and conversation left their mark on him, he being at the time at the plastic stage.

He was then regarded as a promising youth, and the bright hopes which the Lord's people cherished concerning him were afterwards realized. During the ministry of the Rev. R. Finlayson, Helmsdale, he sometimes went on ordinary Sabbaths to hear that remarkable preacher. When a young man, he was frequently called to speak at Fellowship Meetings. Possessed of very superior mental gifts, his powerful intellect and sound judgment, together with his sincere piety, gave him more than an ordinary place among the "Men". He was a great admirer of Dr. Kennedy, Dingwall, and his fine mind and rich Christian experience helped him to appreciate the flights of that eminent preacher who on several occasions delivered a message which to him proved to be a word in season.

There was one day in particular which he used to recall. It was Monday of Creich Communion, and an immense concourse of people attended the Gaelic service on the slope overlooking Loch Migdale. Dr. Kennedy was the preacher, and in the course of his sermon, he said, "You are here before me of whom it is true", and then, though he knew nothing of George's circumstances at the time, he described his case so minutely, and even pointed with his finger to the spot where our worthy sat among the assembled hundreds, that he felt the address contained a special message for himself. He returned from the Com-

munion like the Ethiopian who went on his way rejoicing. George had an attractive personality. His pleasant smile, his kindly manner, his hearty handshake, made him a general favourite. He lived in East Brora, where he conducted a successful business as tailor and clothier. In the general welfare of the community he took a practical interest. For many years he was Chairman of the local School Board, and, being a most intelligent and level-headed man, he discharged the duties of the chair in a very competent manner.

For nearly thirty years he was an elder in the Free Church of Clyne. He was a loyal Free Churchman, and proved to be a tower of strength to the local congregation when it was vacant, after the trying times that followed the Union in 1900. For the last year of his life, he was in delicate health and for some months was confined to the house, but his mental powers remained unimpaired, and his interest in the cause of Christ was unabated. He was translated from the Church Militant in the Autumn of 1906, at the age of 73 years. His wife, Ann Tully, who survived him for more than a year, was a very worthy woman. Her parents hailed from the Borders, her father having come North as a shepherd to Glen Loth, where he lived for many years. There, his daughter, Ann, came under the influence of the powerful preaching of Rev. John Macdonald, Helmsdale. As a young girl she associated with several elderly Christians in the district and accompanied some of them to Communion in the neighbouring parishes, and even to Ross-shire. In order that she might make the most of the services that were conducted in Gaelic, she resolutely set herself to acquire a knowledge of that language, though her parents were ignorant of it, and she succeeded.

DAVID GORDON, STRATH BRORA

David Gordon was born near Gordonbush in Strath Brora. We have reason to believe that, to use the words of Samuel Rutherford, he did not suffer his "sun to be high in the heavens and near afternoon ere he took the gate¹ by the end" for in his boyhood he took great delight in frequenting sacramental services and attended them when they were held in some of the neighbouring parishes. Once, while in his early 'teens, he was present at a memorable Communion in Golspie. On his way thither, as he was passing from Loch Brora to the eastern shoulder of Ben Horn, he was overtaken by a shower of rain which was followed by a warm breeze which dried his clothes ere he reached the place where the Gaelic congregation were assembled in the open air. Mr. Macadam, the godly minister of Nigg, officiated. That Communion, it seems, proved to be a time of blessing and young David could never forget it.

After his marriage, his home was in Dalnaerich, a croft near Gordonbush, but the site of his cottage cannot now be located. It was while he lived there that he went to a Communion in Caithness of which he often spoke. In the previous year, the crops in general were very much under the average, so that meal was very dear. The result was that in some parishes, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper could not be dispensed. One of the first Communions after that year of scarcity was held in a certain part of the Berriedale mission. It was the summer season and the weather was exceedingly fine. The strangers who attended did not wish to be burdensome to the local people and so some of them carried a few provisions with them and slept on hay in barns wrapped in their plaids. Evangelical preachers took part in the solemn services and hungry souls were fed with the "finest of the wheat"; and

¹ Road.

in the prayer-meeting every morning and evening, the Minister of the Sanctuary made himself known to His waiting people. After bidding farewell to their Christian friends at the close of the service on Monday, the strangers from Sutherland left for home, without calling at any house for food. By the time they crossed the Ord, some of them felt rather faint, but they moved on until they came to a well near the road, where they sat down and, after a blessing had been asked, drank the cooling water.

It was the custom for the good people of the North to engage in religious exercises at certain resting places on their way to or from Communions. Accordingly, worship was conducted at that spring and so much did the company seated beside it enjoy the Lord's presence, that they became quite oblivious to their physical wants, and, refreshed in soul and body, they continued their journey. David who was fond of figurative language, used to say when describing that memorable experience, "As we sat beside the spring, a large bannock came rolling down to us, and it was so sustaining that it was more than sufficient for us all."

After the death of the Rev. Walter Ross, David removed to Grianan, to a very comfortable cottage which the minister had built for his own use. This nice dwelling-house occupied an exceedingly fine site, from which one could get a magnificent view of the Strath. He lived there for many years, but latterly removed to Ardochy where he finished his course. Probably none of the "Men" of Clyne, since Angus Baillie, was called to his rest, was such a general favourite as David. He was of a warm, sympathetic nature and was very affable and kindly in his manner—a most lovable man. He had an extraordinary fund of traditions connected with worthies of a bygone generation, which made his company very enjoyable. His presence was always prized in the sick-room or in the house of mourning, for he had a very tender heart. As

a Friday speaker, he was very acceptable, for though he could lay no claim to powers of oratory, he was calm in his delivery, and his apt quotations from the fathers, caused his hearers to listen to him attentively. Though not above ordinary stature, and somewhat slightly built, he was very wiry. When in his ninety-first year, he walked all the way to Rogart Communion, a distance of nearly fourteen miles, wading through the Black Water at the ford where it is about ninety yards broad; and though he rested in one or two houses by the way, he reached his destination in one day. For some years there was a paralytic tremor in his head, but that, seemingly, did not interfere with his powers as a pedestrian.

The last Communion he attended was in his own congregation, less than a year before his decease. On the Sabbath evening, there was a prayer-meeting in the Free Church School, where he and another very old disciple, Hugh Sutherland, father of John Sutherland, the famous precentor, entered the building arm-in-arm. Many of the people present were not a little touched as they saw the two aged saints moving on to their seats.

Towards the end of his pilgrimage, he was favoured with a strong assurance of his saving interest in Christ. One bright day, as he looked out and saw the sun shining on Ben Horn, he remarked, "I am as sure of going to Heaven, as I am that the sun is shining on yonder mountain". A Christian woman who was much with him when on his death-bed, was known to say sometimes that when those who were around him thought he was asleep, his face would shine as if transfigured. He passed to his everlasting rest in 1873, at the patriarchal age of 93 years. His removal was greatly lamented by young and old.

GORDON ROSS, STRATH BRORA

Gordon Ross was born in Balnaccoil, Strath Brora, and died in Helmsdale on 14th October, 1868, aged 77 years. He received a fairly good education, considering the time when he lived, and acted as teacher for several years in a school in the east end of Helmsdale. He was a man of decided natural abilities and a ready speaker in Gaelic and English, and sometimes given to expressing his thoughts in rhyme. In the beginning of his religious life, while still young, he came under the deep conviction of sin, and continued for a considerable time in distress of mind, ere he was brought to the liberty of the Gospel. He was one that had much of the secret of the Master.

A company of worthies from the parishes of Loth and Latheron, including Gordon and the famous Sandy Gair, were once at the Communion in Clyne, and, on the Monday evening, were returning homewards on foot. As they were journeying along, some of the older men were engaged in edifying conversation, but it was noticed that Gordon for part of the way was silent. After they had passed Kintradwell, Sandy Gair, turning to Gordon, said, "What can you be thinking about when your voice is not heard?" "Well", Gordon replied, "it has come before my mind that a piece of fresh salmon would be very nice as an evening meal to refresh us on the journey." "Oh, you are very extravagant, Gordon", said Sandy, "but if you get that salmon of yours, we shall be glad to have our share of it." Soon the travellers reached Lothbeg, where they made for the house of the miller there, whose home was a resting place to many of the Lord's people on their way to and from Communions. The kind man went out to welcome the worthies, and brought them to the best room in his small cottage. "Where is the good wife?", the miller was asked after the company had been seated. "I

may as well explain matters", was the reply. "A little while ago, I happened to be outside when I noticed some movement in the mill channel. What was this but a fine salmon which in descending the stream entered the mill-lade and continuing its course was soon dashed on the stones underneath the mill-wheel. The fish I secured without feeling that I was in any way a poacher, and my wife is at present preparing it for the table, and you need have no scruples in partaking of it." A smile played on Sandy's face as he said, "I see, Gordon, your salmon has not been long of coming."

Gordon was once in such straitened circumstances that one Saturday, he found himself with only a handful of meal in his barrel, and with no money in his purse. But the good man in his extremity betook himself to Him Who heareth the cry of the needy. After partaking of a light evening-meal, and engaging in the worship of God, some of the family had retired to rest, when a knock was heard at the door, and when it was opened, there stepped in a woman from one of the neighbouring houses with a ponderous basket containing oat-cakes and newly-baked scones and sundry articles of food. When the kind neighbour had deposited on the table the good things which she had brought, Gordon asked her why she had not come when it first occurred to her to do so. "Indeed", she replied, "it was suggested to me several times to come, but as I was very busy, I thought of delaying my visit until Monday, but at last it was impressed so forcibly on my mind that I should make no delay, and that accounts for my visit at this late hour." On ascertaining the state of matters, the woman returned home rejoicing that she was instrumental in bringing help to a needy family, while the worthy head of the household did not forget to acknowledge the Lord's hand in sending such seasonable relief.

John Sutherland, Brora, the famous precentor, once happened to be in Helmsdale, when he met Gordon. The

latter asked what news he had brought with him from Clyne. John replied that a neighbour of his, George Grant, then a most promising young man, and a special favourite of Gordon's, was seriously ill with a fever. Gordon was silent for a little and then said, "Oh, George is not to be taken away at present. Give him this message from me—"God raiseth all that are bowed down and upholdeth all that fall". (Ps. 145, 14.) That will serve him as a handstaff." When Gordon's message was conveyed to the young man, he felt, as he often used to relate, as if it had acted like a powerful tonic. He made a complete recovery, and was spared for about half a century after his illness, and for nearly thirty years was a useful and highly respected elder in the Free Church of Clyne.

One morning towards the end of August 1864, Gordon was asked how he was, "Oh, we had a feast during the night, for the angels were accompanying the spirit of godly John Sutherland, Badbea, to glory". The neighbour expressed the hope that good John was still spared. "Oh no," said Gordon, "his spirit took its departure at three o'clock this morning." Seeing the other was still sceptical, Gordon said, "The Wick coach has not passed yet: go and enquire what is the latest news from Badbea." When the coach arrived, the driver confirmed the fact that John Sutherland had passed away that morning at three o'clock. Though Gordon was a strict disciplinarian, he was a lover of good men, and was particularly tender and sympathetic in his dealing with young people in whom he saw some good thing toward the God of Israel. He once observed a pious young man—Joseph Sutherland—a son of the famous Adam Sutherland, Kilpheadair, pass his house, on his way to an evening meeting, probably at a Communion season. Gordon guessed the young man had no food, but he could not at first prevail upon him to come in. At last, suspecting what made his friend so reluctant to enter, he said very gently—"Oh, come away, Joseph my dear,

for I will say grace myself, and will not ask you to engage at meals." No sooner did the bashful youth hear these considerate words than he willingly accepted Gordon's hospitality. Though Gordon was a strong non-intrusionist, and inclined to sympathize with those who anticipated the Disruption by breaking away from the non-evangelical ministers prior to 1843, yet he was afraid that in the excitement of these stirring times, some might be making too much of the matter of church connection. Shortly after the settlement of Rev. Alexander Macleod in Rogart, Gordon was at a Communion in that parish when much was said about the Free Church and of those who had "come out". Gordon, fearing that some in their zeal about "coming out" might be overlooking the one thing needful, gave a gentle hint on Friday of the danger of being carried away by a sectarian spirit. All that he said when called to speak to the question was, "We hear very much at present about the Free Church, but there are none free but the true church which Christ has made free, and they that belong to that Church shall never seek to come out." He then sat down.

Like the good men of Sutherland, Gordon would not tolerate any thing that savoured of irreverence in religious exercises. If a young man was called from his work and should come in his shirt-sleeves to family worship, he was at once sent away for his coat.

Gordon Ross taught an S.P.C.K. School in Aschoilemore in his native Strath Brora. His name appears on the list of teachers as early as 1813. He continued in charge of the school there till the "Clearances". He was also employed by the same S.P.C.K. in Helmsdale.

CHAPTER II

PARISH OF GOLSPIE

JOHN CUTHBERT, GOLSPIE

JOHN CUTHBERT was a tall, well-built and handsome man. He was an unwearied pedestrian, and that served him in good stead in many a long journey which he made in attending Communion services. Seemingly he was born where he lived, in what was known as Croit-fhraoich (Heather croft) near Strath Stephen. He was endowed with mental gifts of a very superior order. Probably he had few to equal him in mental calibre among the "men" of Sutherland in his day. His views of Divine truth were most profound and expressed in a form that was most original and striking.

Rev. Alex. Macpherson was for some time a teacher in Tain, before his ordination. When he got the presentation to Golspie, Dr. Angus MacIntosh asked him if he had a mind to be settled in Golspie, and on being informed by Mr. Macpherson that he purposed to accept the presentation, the great minister asked if he would preach in Tain before going to Golspie, as he should like very much to hear him. But the presentee refused to preach. "Ah well", said Dr. MacIntosh, "you refuse to give one sermon now, and yet you think of going to take the charge of Golspie where there is one man before whom I should feel it difficult to speak"—referring to John Cuthbert.

He was catechist in Golspie for forty years. During his office there, a man in the village had to appear before the Session for misconduct. John Cuthbert's faithful

dealings with the delinquent, whose name was Alexander, roused the wrongdoer's anger to such an extent that he determined to wreak his vengeance on his godly reprover, and, with that object in view, he devised a plan for bringing a stain on the unblemished character of the catechist. Professing to be interested in Cuthbert's official duties, he invited him to his house to hold a diet of catechizing there. The good man was pleased to see that Alexander appeared to take an interest in such meetings, and gladly consented. After the services were concluded, Alexander took the catechist to a room where an ample repast was on the table and pressed him to wait for dinner. The catechist would not stay and stated that he would have nothing but a drink of water as he felt thirsty. In getting the water, Alexander managed to introduce a very considerable quantity of ardent spirits that Cuthbert might get intoxicated. The worthy man, thinking that he was offered pure water, took the vessel and drank part of its contents, and then directly set out for home. Before reaching his home he felt drowsy and lay down in a secluded spot. He had only been a very short time there when a bosom friend of his—a brother elder—Hugh Gray, happened to pass near the place and in the fading twilight he espied some object at a little distance and on turning aside, he discovered the catechist. Hugh helped him home and called on the following morning. "Oh Hugh," said Cuthbert, who now suspected what Alexander had done, "how did you find me, and did anyone see us when you were helping me home?" "No, not one," was the answer. "How glad I am for the sake of the Cause, but if that poor man has deliberately attempted to get me intoxicated, his shall be an awful death." Some time afterwards, Alexander was lodged in the old jail at Tain when a fire broke out. Several people were burned to death—among them Alexander.

One summer during the time of great drought, John

was at a prayer-meeting in Clyne, when he was called to engage in prayer. While leading the devotions, he used the expression, "cha téid mi á seasamh nam bonn gus an d'fhoir Thu Do ghealladh" ("I'll not sit down until Thou wilt give Thy promise") and before he sat down, the patter of rain was heard on the roof.

Once in conversation with a worthy from Inverness-shire, John Cuthbert remarked that in his young days he knew sixty men who could be called to pray in public in the small parish of Golspie, but that these by that time had all been removed. Many of them probably were the fruits of the ministry of the godly John S. Sutherland and the revival that had passed over that parish shortly before the '45 rising.

In speaking to the question on the Friday of a Communion in Creich, John remarked, "Chaidh an claidheamh troimh dhaonnachd Chrìosd gus an do ruig e an Diadhachd is cha b'urrainn dà dhol na b'fhaidc." (The sword went through Christ's human nature until it reached the Divine and then it could go no further.) Rev. Mr. Kennedy, Killlearnan, and his neighbour from Ferintosh, Dr. John Macdonald—the great Apostle of the North—were present, and both were so much struck with the remark that each gave a decided nod of appreciation. At the close of the service, the minister of Ferintosh said to the other ministers who were with him in the tent, "Leigibh mach mi gus am beir mi air làimh air an duine sin a rinn a dheagh bhreabhcas air an Uan." (Let me out till I shake hands with that man who made a good breakfast upon the Lamb.)

John Cuthbert was called to his rest on 11th March, 1830, aged 81 years.

HUGH GRAY, GOLSPIE

Hugh Gray, like not a few of his contemporaries, in the North, was one that had taken his share of military

service. As a young man, he joined the county regiment, the famous 93rd Sutherland Highlanders. After his return from the army, he found employment on one of the local farms. He had the greatest veneration for John Cuthbert, Hugh, when a young man, was once ploughing when he observed John walking along the road which passed hard by the field. Hugh was nearing the end of the park which was next to the road and being very bashful he did not care to be addressed by the worthy catechist, so he hurried his horses and turned quickly that he might get away from the road when Cuthbert was approaching. But the saintly man stood on the road till the ploughman again came up and asked whether it was because he disliked him that he hastened away. Hugh honestly confessed that his hurried movements did not mean any lack of regard on his part. "If that is so", said the aged worthy, "you must come to-night to such a house where I purpose having a diet of catechizing." The young man attended, and at the close the catechist asked him to conclude with prayer. In referring to that experience, he used to say that he was asked in such a kindly and encouraging way that he could not refuse, and seemingly he found great liberty in the exercise.

Hugh Gray could hardly ever refer to John Cuthbert without tears streaming down his cheeks, and there is no doubt that he owed much to that man of God, under whose influence his Christian life was greatly moulded. They were bound to each other by a most ardent attachment. Hugh looked up to the aged saint with filial affection, while the other loved his young friend as if he were a son.

Hugh's true piety gave him a warm place in the hearts of the Lord's people, though his low estimate of himself was such that it was no easy matter to get him to lead the devotions in a religious meeting.

He was elected to the eldership in 1835.

JOSEPH ROSS, GOLSPIE

Joseph Ross, it is said, was a native of Easter Ross. When about 18 years of age, he was savingly awakened under the "Apostle of the North" who was assisting at the Communion at Tain. He was for some time in great distress of mind, but, after he was brought to the liberty of the Gospel, he became a bright and burning light. He was a very lively and earnest Christian and a great wrestler in prayer. Physically he was very strong, handsome in person and had a most powerful and pleasant voice; and such was the fervour of his spirit that at his devotions, when he retired to isolated places, he became so oblivious to his surroundings as to be heard a quarter of a mile away, and sometimes even at a distance of half a mile.

When quite a young married man, he happened to be working in the parish of Lairg. At the time, a young girl in Shinness in whose case he took a prayerful interest, was seriously ill. After his day's labour, he used to spend a considerable portion of the long summer evenings in Shinness wood, wrestling on behalf of the youthful sufferer. There were some who could never forget the ring of his voice in the stillness of the dewy eve, and certain of his striking petitions as he poured out his heart at a Throne of Grace.

He was a mason to trade, and, after coming to Backies, which he seemingly did in the thirties of last century, he was employed in building some of the stone bridges which were erected when new roads were constructed in different parts of the country.

On one occasion, he happened to be working in the parish of Dornoch. The Communion services in the neighbouring parish of Rogart were drawing near and Joseph had a great desire to be present, but the foreman refused to allow him off. On the Friday morning, how-

ever, Joseph's mind was so intent on joining the worshippers at the Fellowship Meeting that he left his work and set out in his mason's clothes, and such was his exercise of mind that he did not realize he was in his moleskins when he took his place in the congregation. His wife was present, but as she sat beside the tent, she did not see her husband, nor did she expect him, as she knew his overseer was opposed to his attending these week-day meetings. As the men were being called, she was surprised to hear the Minister call Joseph Ross to speak. She said to herself, "There will be no Joseph Ross here to-day", but to her astonishment, she heard his voice. Turning her head in his direction, to her confusion she noticed how her husband was attired, and felt overwhelmed with shame. At the close, she came up to him and said, "How ashamed I felt to-day when I saw you speaking!" "Have I said anything wrong?" "No, but your dress." "Oh," he answered, "I forgot all about my working clothes."

His earthly course was brief, for he was called away at a comparatively early age, but it was the "path of the just which shineth more and more unto the perfect day".

MRS. JOSEPH ROSS

Mrs. Joseph Ross was an eminent Christian woman in her day. Her maiden name was Mary Macdonald, and she was a native of the Beaully district. Her father was a Roman Catholic, and she used to go with him to Chapel, though it is said that her mother was a Protestant.

When a young girl, she happened to call one Saturday evening in midsummer upon some cousins in the neighbourhood who were busy preparing their dresses with a view to attending the Communion services in the famous Burn of Ferintosh on the following day; and they invited her to accompany them. The outing appealed to her and

she agreed to their proposal. The minister of the congregation, Dr. Macdonald, took some part in the solemn services of that Sabbath, and in the course of his address, young Mary Macdonald was savingly awakened. The giddy girl returned as a true penitent, and for some time she was in great distress of mind. She now absented herself from Chapel and began to associate with pious people in the parish. The local priest came to hear that she had deserted his services, and on the first occasion on which he met her, he so belaboured her with his cane that he broke a joint in one of her fingers, which she could never afterwards bend. For some time she continued in great distress of mind ere her bonds were loosed.

Some time after her marriage, her husband removed to Backies where he remained until the end of his earthly course. As she was left a widow when some of the children were of a tender age, she had a struggle in bringing up her family; but she cast her burdens on Him Who relieveth the fatherless and widow, and she was not disappointed. Her neighbours and Christian friends—of whom she had many in the County—showed her practical sympathy. But though humble in outward circumstances, she occupied a very honourable place in the religious life of the community, for probably there was no professing woman in the whole of the East Coast of the County more widely known or more highly respected than she, with perhaps the single exception of the wife of Gustavus Munro, Creich. Mrs. Ross had a strong personality and possessed great force of character, clear discernment and sound judgment, and in her case a vigorous intellect was balanced by a warm heart. Her ripe experience, sympathetic nature and special tenderness towards any in whom she saw any traces of a contrite spirit, caused her society to be much sought after by exercised people.

Perhaps the outstanding characteristic of this excellent woman was her deeply devotional spirit. Not only did she

wrestle long and fervently in her closet, but prayer seemed to be her element—the very atmosphere in which she lived and moved.

Some felt that her very presence in a meeting was fitted to raise the spiritual temperature. The late John Gunn, Kinlochbervie, often admitted that when called to speak at a Fellowship Meeting, he used to look among the assembled hundreds for this worthy woman, and if he noticed her he was always greatly encouraged, for he was assured that her silent petitions were ascending on his behalf.

James Matheson, Clais-nan-cnàmh, was returning home on the Monday of a Communion, when tidings came that peace had been proclaimed at the close of the Crimean War. "Oh, that is good news", said the good man when he heard the report, "but Widow Ross's prayers may have had their own share in bringing about such a desirable result." Such a compliment from such a source was very significant. Notwithstanding her high attainments in the spiritual life there was something so very motherly in her ways that even young people, especially such as were seriously-minded, were much drawn to her. Some would bring to her matters of a very confidential nature, and others have been known to go to her for advice concerning matters pertaining to this world, for not only was she dowered with much sanctified common-sense, but she was privileged to have not a little of the secret of the Lord. There was a pious maiden of handsome form and features whose hand was being sought by several young men, and one of them in particular was most assiduous in his attentions. But before giving definite encouragement to him, she resolved to walk to Backies, a distance of nearly twenty miles to consult Widow Ross, whom she had often seen in her father's house on Communion occasions. When she arrived her aged confidante said to her, "Oh, my dear, the young man to whom you refer is not to be your husband. Go home and I am persuaded you shall not have

to wait long for him who is to be your partner in life." When she returned home there was before her a young man who had come nearly forty miles to see her, though their acquaintance prior to that was slight. The result of this meeting was that ultimately the two were united in marriage and after more than forty years of wedded life, they finished their course in the same year.

Sometimes this spiritually-minded woman would tell her family that she expected visitors, though she had received no intimation, written or verbal. A worthy man who lived at a distance, had great regard for this "Mother in Israel" and occasionally called to see her. On one of his visits, she said to her daughter, "Get your kettle to prepare tea for the friend who is on the way." Her presentiment proved to be true, for the water did not get time to boil ere he arrived. When she happened to see this friend, she as a rule would ask him what he had been doing at a certain time, and it cheered him not a little to find how clearly she could refer to his experiences. Sometimes she would tell this friend what had been troubling him, though he had never spoken to any fellow-creature about it.

This eminently godly woman was not long confined to bed. She had an attack of bronchitis to which she succumbed in about thirteen days. During her illness, many pious friends visited her. Among them was the young woman already referred to. Though resident many miles away, she considered it a great privilege to have an opportunity of seeing and ministering to one to whom she owed so much and to whom she was so warmly attached. The mind of the patient sometimes wandered and she imagined she was again hearing her father in the faith, Dr. Macdonald, and his name was heard several times on her lips. She passed to her everlasting rest on the 12th April, 1873, aged 80 years, much and deservedly regretted.

JOHN AND JAMES SUTHERLAND, GOLSPIE

John Sutherland was a native of Strath Brora and removed to Backies when there were only a few houses in that township. Of him it could be truly said that he adorned his profession by a singularly consistent and humble walk. He was a deeply-exercised and tender-hearted Christian whose affections were set on things that are above. Being of a kindly nature and exceedingly gentle in his manner, this saintly man was greatly loved, not only by the aged but by the young, and looked up to with feelings of veneration. Once on his way home from a Communion in Tain, he met his two sons, James and Andrew, who, in his absence, had been called up for military service and were on their way to Fort George. He accompanied them for some distance and on giving them suitable advice, he parted with them and said in addressing the Most High, "Glory be to Thee that I did not make idols of them."

He was spared to a ripe old age and as he neared the end of his pilgrimage he longed to depart. His last day on earth was a Sabbath, when he expressed a strong desire to enter into his everlasting rest before the end of that day. His wish was realized, for near sunset he finished his course. The exact date of his death is not known, but it took place a few years before the Disruption. In 1835 he was one of the men ordained to the eldership in the parish of Golspie. The Sabbath evening meeting or "Reading" which for many years was held in the house of John Cuthbert, was transferred on his demise to John Sutherland's dwelling and after the decease of the latter it was kept under George Graham's roof.

John's soldier son James, already referred to, greatly resembled his father in disposition and followed closely in his footsteps. After his discharge from the Army, he returned to Backies, and was soon taken on as a labourer

by the Duke of Sutherland who gave employment to a number of workmen on his estate. After a time, there was a rumour that the work was to be curtailed involving the dismissal of some of the men. One of them told his fears to James, who after a short stillness replied, "I believe something will come out of the sea or from the mountains that will prevent the men from being idle." Not long afterwards, there was a deluge of rain on the hills so that drains were flooded and fields were furrowed, and such were the heaps of debris that were left that the estate officials were very glad to have men available to repair the damage. James was a man not only of sincere but of attractive piety, for he was meek and pleasant, very sympathetic and a lover of good men. He was for some years an elder in the Free Church of Golspie and faithfully attended to his official duties.

GEORGE GRAHAM, GOLSPIE

George Graham lived in Backies. He was thoroughly transparent and very outspoken and when listening to sermons that had not the Gospel ring about them, he gave outward expression to his dissatisfaction by tapping with his staff on the floor. One day one of the Cooks occupied the pulpit of Golspie Church. It, seemingly, was the first occasion that George had the privilege of hearing the preacher. The people noticed during all the sermon, the services of the stick were never called for. As the congregation were moving out, George said, loud enough to be heard over the Church, "Thanks be to Thee for Thou hast sent us to-day a Cook who has prepared for us a wholesome meal which we could partake of without fear of being choked with hairs." On one occasion at a Communion during a very dry summer, George was earnestly

praying for rain, and in his supplication, he used the words, "Cuir an t-uisge nuas ach dèan a chriaradh chum is nach bàth e sinn." (Send down rain but sieve it so that it won't drown us.)

He died in 1847.

CHAPTER III

PARISH OF DORNOCH

JAMES MATHESON, DORNOCH

JAMES MATHESON, Clais-nan-cnàmh, was born in the year 1805. When a youth he was in the employment of a gentleman in the Tain district, who was not a strict Sabbatarian. James was ordered to fetch some water on the Sabbath evening for his master's use. The youth reluctantly obeyed, but after retiring that night, he had an experience which he could never forget. After falling asleep, he was awakened by feeling, as he thought, water being poured on him in bed. He was seized with terror as the guilt of his Sabbath-breaking flashed before his mind. It is said that this was what first awakened him to a sense of his condition as a lost sinner. His impressions, seemingly, were deepened; for when about the age of 25 years, his soul concern was so great that for a long time he was quite prostrated and brought near the very brink of despair. For many years he would not lie in his bed in his own cottage but spent a great part of the night in prayer outside, and when he came in in the early hours of the morning, instead of availing himself of the comforts of his bed, he would often stretch himself on the floor wrapped in his plaid. It was when on his way to the Mound that deliverance came. He never cared to pass the spot where the snare was broken without retiring to acknowledge the deliverance which was then vouchsafed to him.

He was once at the mid-summer Communion in Clyne, where David Ross, Dornoch, shared a room with him.

David, who enjoyed good health, slept soundly for some time, and awakening in the early morning, found James prostrate on the hearth-rug, wrestling in prayer. David got up and gently spread some of the bed-clothes on James, who had not dressed, and seemed to be oblivious of the attentions of his friend, continuing his devotions for a considerable time. Yet at Public Worship on that day, he showed no signs of having spent so much time at his vigils. James was often in the habit of going to Rogart to hear the venerable Mr. Macleod, whose richly experimental preaching he found particularly helpful. One day as he sat in Rogart Free Church, he saw as if a spark had come down and fallen on Mr. Macleod's shoulder. The minister's first words that day after he had read his text were, "You may be here to-day who will have the last offer of the Gospel." It is said that one of the hearers was savingly awakened at that service.

James was at one time in Assynt in company with Alex. Kerr. They were speaking of the Lord's people, when on the name of one particular individual being mentioned, James referred to him as a good man. At this remark, Alexander, turning to James, said jocularly, "Surely you must be a good man yourself before you can know that such a person is a good man." "Oh, my dear", was James's reply, "don't you read that when the glorious Head of the Church was on the earth, the devils themselves knew Him."

A worthy woman, Ann Mackenzie, who lived near Ullapool, and who died at an advanced age—over 90 years—used when comparatively young, to walk long distances to Communion in different parts of the Highlands. On one occasion, she set out to Dornoch on the sacramental week there. In the course of her journey across the hills, she came to Strath Oykel and sat down in a hollow beside a burn. There she took out her Bible and read the 13th Chapter of John's Gospel. She was in distress of soul at

the time and resolved to take it as a token for good if on arriving at Dornoch she should hear that same chapter read at the first meeting she attended. It was then customary to have prayer-meetings in different districts in the parish on the mornings and evenings of the Communion days. It is not said how long the young woman took to walk from her home, but she arrived in the neighbourhood of Claisnan-cnàmh in time for the first sacramental prayer-meeting. The man who presided, announced his intention to read a chapter in Isaiah, when James who was present, said to him, "You may read that chapter on another occasion, but for the present, read the 13th Chapter of John for there is someone here to whom that passage is speaking." The girl, it may be added, had told no one there what had happened at the burnside. On another occasion this same young woman attended a Communion in the same neighbourhood. Before setting out, she visited an eminent Christian in her vicinity who was a "Mother in Israel", and at that time was confined to bed and in deep mental trouble. She asked her young friend to convey a message from her to James Matheson and then inform her what he thought of her case. The young woman, not knowing James personally, had a delicacy in approaching him, but she got someone to introduce her. "You have brought before me", said the good man, "a matter that is not easily dealt with, but come to me before your return." She did so, when he told her what she was to say to her pious neighbour. On her return, James's answer was duly delivered and when the aged and tried saint heard it the clouds were dispelled and forthwith the joy of God's salvation filled her soul and in that exultant frame of mind she continued till in a short time she was transferred to the House of many Mansions.

During the Russian War, James did not go to bed, when at home, for two years. It is said that some Sutherland lads in the 93rd Highlanders, who had not met James in

the flesh, more than once saw a strange man moving about the trenches. When some of them returned home and were at Creich on the Friday of a Communion, they saw James and recognized him as the person who used to appear to them in Crimea. His housekeeper for a great length of time was Betsy Mackay. When she first came to his house, though a most respectable woman, she had not undergone a saving change. After the work of the day, she often felt drowsy at night, and did not appreciate James's prolonged vigils, for she did not wish to retire till he should come in from his devotions, and at the same time she did not desire to be deprived of her sleep. One night, she retired after James had gone out and resolved that instead of getting up when he came in, she would pretend that she was asleep. When James appeared, he went to the door of her room and said, "Betsy, are you awake?", but there was no reply, only a feigned snore. He addressed the same question to her the second time, but Betsy took no notice of it. The third time he used the same words but there was no response. James then said very solemnly, "Oh poor Betsy, I saw Satan and yourself concocting this plan, but for each time you refused to answer, you shall have a year when sleep will depart from your eyelids."

Not very long afterwards, Betsy was brought under conviction of sin so deep and prolonged that for three years she had only broken sleep and some nights her eyes never closed.

James passed to his everlasting rest on 18th July, 1875, aged 70 years. Of him it could be truly said, "Behold a prince and a great man has fallen in Israel."

JAMES MACKAY, DORNOCH (Duine an Torra)

James Mackay was a thickly-set and very strong man. His humble cottage was built on a hillock near Evelix and this accounted for the name of Duine an Torra by which he was better known all over Sutherland proper. The very meagre profits which he derived from his small croft he tried to supplement by making creels and baskets during the winter months for which he got material from a wood near the Evelix River. One day as he was busy cutting his twigs in a clump of bushes which grew within the bounds of Evelix Farm, he was accosted by the farmer who found fault with him for thinning the hazels. As James was addressed in English, a language which he did not understand, he was unable to follow the farmer's words, but, surmising that the latter objected to the cutting of some withes, he turned round and replied in Gaelic, "Surely I have a right to take as much as I please out of my Father's wood." The farmer on hearing James's words, went away and never afterwards molested him.

James once made a journey to see John Grant (Ian Grand Mór) who at that time lived in Diobale, Kildonan. On his arrival, he was forthwith catechized by his host, and one of the questions he was asked was, "An aithne dhuit an taigh cùil aig Daibhidh?" The "taigh-cùil" or back wing in the old Sutherland houses of a century ago was the apartment where provisions and other commodities were stored. The question was practically this, "Do you know the storehouse of David?" "I must admit", was James's reply, "that I know something of it." "See to it," said John, "that you know something of this, and make sure of the foundation, however far you get on with the building."

James, like many of the Sutherland worthies, was in the habit of expressing his thoughts in symbolical language. A prayer-meeting was held, not far from his house, on

Saturdays, with a special view to seek the Divine blessing on the services on the following Sabbath. These meetings he most conscientiously attended, but a certain number of the neighbours absented themselves in harvest, though they generally were present during the rest of the year. During the summer and autumn months, the swine which the crofters reared were tethered, to prevent them from making inroads on the corn, but when the crops were secured in harvest, they had liberty to roam over the fields. James thought that some of the owners, in one respect, were not unlike their swine, for they were so bound with the fetters of worldliness that they would not exercise self-denial in coming to the prayer-meeting in the busy season. When such put in their appearance at the end of the harvest, James was wont to say, "Make room, make room, be it known to you that the swine have got rid of their tethers," in allusion to the fact that the roaming of the swine on the fields, and the attendance of their owners at the prayer-meeting took place at the same time.

He had occasion to call at Dornoch manse at one time during the ministry of Mr. Angus Kennedy. The day was cold and wet and he was not very warmly clad. The minister's wife felt much sympathy for him and ventured to remark that she was afraid they were not very kind to him at home. "Oh indeed they are not", was his reply, "I have a wife but she is very bad to me." "Ah," said the lady of the Manse, "she must be brought to order." Indeed that will defy people", said James. "Besides", he continued, "she has three daughters that are even worse than herself." The "bad wife" was the carnal mind, and her "three daughters" were the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life, and the poor man had a sad time of it between them all.

In his day, the Northern Missionary Society held its Annual Meeting at Tain in August, when it was usual to have an English sermon in the Church and a Gaelic service

in the open air. This yearly gathering was looked forward to with great delight by the Christian community on both sides of the Dornoch Firth, and considerable numbers from the parish of Dornoch were in the habit of attending. James, on one of these occasions, was present but owing to detention at the Meikle Ferry, the text had been just announced ere he reached the congregation. The pracher in Gaelic that day was the eminent Mr. John Kennedy of Killearnan—one of his prime favourites. Our worthy, in referring some time afterwards to the uplifting of soul which he experienced at the service in Tain, described it in his own metaphorical way as follows, "I was at Tain, at the market—meaning of course the Gospel market—John had begun the tune—that is the preacher had read the text—before I arrived and the piping was so fine—referring to the impressive and comforting Evangelical sermon—that ere I was aware I found myself in the midst of the reel, along with the other dancers, and I continued to dance while the piper continued to play."

James was reluctant to engage at the prayer-meetings, if he saw that other worthies were uncalled. One Saturday, when the man who presided asked him to lead in prayer at the close, he declined, but the other was peremptory and said, "Though we should wait here till next day, not another shall engage but you." Whereupon James got up and all he said was, "Destroy what has caused hell, save the soul, and Thine shall be the Glory, Amen." He then went out. In those days, the "Men's" meetings were concluded with prayer, and in the usual order of things, James's prayer should have brought the meeting to a close: but instead of moving away, some kept their seats expecting the meeting to be prolonged, and one ventured to remark to the worthy who presided, "Surely we are not to regard these few words as a closing prayer." "Well," replied the good man, "You may never again hear such a remarkable prayer."

On another occasion, he was asked in the same place to conclude at the Saturday meeting. His prayer contained only the following striking words, "Beannaicht gu robh an Ceann nach d'fhàg e fhéin gun chlann 's ged nach 'eil iad ach gann gu'm bheil iad idir ann", which may roughly be rendered:—

To the Head be all the praise;
That He children doth raise,
And though few in these days;
There is a remnant always.

Mr. John Sutherland, teacher, Lairg, and Mr. Donald Macdonald, merchant, were once speaking to James, after being at Creich Communion, when in referring to the carnal mind, in his own characteristic way he remarked, "My wife that I thought I had buried, I found sitting at the fire on my return."

His manner was so unusual and his mode of expression so original that to strangers he might at first appear to be eccentric, but there are many different kinds of stones used in the building of Zion. (Is. 54, 11.)

There was a man in the parish of Loth, who had the habit of spending much of the Sabbath morning in bed instead of engaging in the exercises of Divine Worship. Some years after the death of James Mackay, he had a dream, in which he saw a little man with a long blue coat, and holding a staff of a peculiar kind, stand beside his bed who addressed him thus:—"I am James Mackay, Torra, and though I have now been so many years before the Throne in glory, I am sent to tell you that the habit of sleeping away the Sabbath is a sin, which is sending thousands in this generation to destruction and I am sent to call on you to desist." The man, it is said, ceased to spend his Sabbaths as formerly, and became very different in his whole life and conversation. Some little time afterwards he was at a market and met Gordon Ross, Helmsdale, whom he knew, and was greatly surprised to find

that he carried a peculiar staff, exactly like the one he saw in his dream. He took the liberty of asking Gordon how he came into the possession of the staff, and was informed that it once belonged to Duinc an Torra, but that after his death it was given to him as a keepsake.

Duinc an Torra passed to his rest in March, 1840.

WILLIAM MACINTOSH, ACHLEY, DORNOCH

William Macintosh was one of the very foremost of the "Men" of Dornoch. Latterly, from his age and ripe Christian experience, he was given the leading place in the prayer and fellowship meetings in the parish.

William was a man who had extraordinary influence in the parish and exerted it for the furtherance of the religious welfare of the people. He was deeply interested in the spiritual good of all ages. He was not satisfied with giving newly-married people suitable exhortations and encouragement to observe the worship of God in their household, but made it a rule to visit their homes a year after their marriage to conduct worship. William began the exercise himself, and always insisted on the young man's concluding with prayer, however brief he might be. He was so tender and sympathetic, so tactful and persuasive in encouraging young bashful men that he almost invariably got them to engage. It is no wonder that as the fruit of such faithful and fatherly dealings, family-worship among the rising householders was universal in his neighbourhood.

William had much of the "secret of the Lord". He had a married daughter residing at some distance from his house who turned ill rather suddenly and died. When she had passed away, a messenger was sent to acquaint her godly parent with the sad event. But the bearer of the melancholy tidings had not gone very far when William was seen on the way to the house of mourning. "You

need not speak a word," he said to the messenger, "I was certain before I left home of my daughter's decease and that is why I am here."

WILLIAM GUNN, PRONCY, DORNOCH, AND HIS WIFE

William Gunn was a native of the parish of Kildonan. He was a tailor to trade, and so neat a craftsman was he that he was employed in upholstering some of the furniture in Dunrobin Castle. In stature he was low, and on one occasion when he was called at a Fellowship Meeting, the presiding minister asked him to stand on a form that he might be better heard by the congregation.

His wife, Janet MacIntosh, was one of the most distinguished Christian women of her day in the parish. When on the threshold of early womanhood she was brought under deep concern of soul. The teaching of the minister of Dornoch was not helpful to one in her state of mind, but young Janet who was hungering for the bread of life, resolved to go in search of it beyond the bounds of her native parish. Lairg at that time enjoyed the privilege of having the Gospel faithfully and ably proclaimed from the lips of the godly Mr. Thomas Mackay and this anxious maiden resolved to go to hear him. Accordingly she left home one Saturday night or in the early hours of the Sabbath and called at the house of Donald Maclean (MacEanraic) who then lived in Strath Carnaig. In her distress, she came away without dressing appropriately, and made for Strath Carnaig in order that Donald, who was then a truly godly young man, and newly married, might accompany her; for she was so tempest tossed that she hesitated to proceed alone. Donald sympathized with the earnest enquirer and expressed his willingness to guide her through the hills. Being singularly prudent, he got his young wife not only to furnish Janet with a suitable dress for the occasion, but to accompany them to Lairg. They

reached the old church of Lairg before public worship had begun. From some of the people who were standing in the surrounding graveyard, Donald heard that Mr. Mackay was ill and unable to preach ; but he was afraid to make known such unwelcome news to the anxious young woman. The local men, in the circumstances, purposed to hold a prayer-meeting. The strangers from Dornoch entered the church with the other worshippers, but the devotional exercises had not proceeded long when the minister, unwell though he had been, felt the Word as fire in his bones so that he could not refrain from coming to the house of God. His text that day was Habak. 3, 16, "When I heard my belly trembled, my lips quivered at the voice, etc." from which he preached a sermon of extraordinary power. Janet's case was minutely described and her bonds were untied, so that she went away rejoicing. For considerably over half a century after that memorable day in Lairg church, Janet continued to walk humbly in the way of holiness, and many a pilgrim in the journey Zionwards has been helped by her example, her sympathy and her prayers.

She dwelt much in the secret place where the Lord was often pleased to send forth His light with His truth so as to guide her with regard to passing events. Once at a Communion in Ross-shire, a number of strangers were being accommodated in a farmer's house. On Friday morning, there was very heavy rain and as the church could not hold half of the people, the services were held in the open air. The farmer felt uneasy, and as his guests after dressing in the morning, were retiring to a barn and some outhouses to engage in secret prayer, he noticed Janet and another woman passing out. "Plead for favourable weather," said he, "and let me know when you return whether you find the Truth speaking to you in connection with the weather." One of the women, after a time, appeared, of whom he asked whether any special passage

of Scripture had occurred to her. She replied that that word had come before her, "For but a moment lasts His wrath" or as it runs in the metrical version of the Psalm in Gaelic, "His wrath lasts but for a little moment." "Oh," said the farmer, "that word is not necessarily assuring, for in the 'little moment' we may be consumed." ("Feudaidh a' mhionaid bheag an gnothuch a dhèanamh ruinne.") Shortly afterwards Janet came in and was in turn interrogated as to what she thought of the weather. "Well," she answered, "that passage was borne very strongly on my spirit—'When the feet of the priests that bore the ark touched the waters of Jordan the waters were cut off'." "That will do", said the good man of the house. Under a weeping sky the people repaired to the place of meeting, but as the ministers who took part in the services entered the tent, the rain ceased, the clouds began to disperse and the day proved to be most favourable. Her husband, like many of the natives of Kildonan in his time, had considerable facility in expressing his thoughts in rhyme. She also possessed the same gift. They conjointly composed several elegies in which they commemorated the praises of some of the local worthies. It is said that in their old age, when unable to move much from home, they sat one on each side of the fire and spent the time in producing their spiritual songs which consisted of alternate stanzas from husband and wife. Their elegies have run through two editions. William Gunn was made to pass through great tribulation on his way to his everlasting rest. This worthy couple died within a short period of one another about the year 1840.

SIMON MACDONALD, DORNOCH

Simon Macdonald was the son of an eminently godly man of the same name from Clachnaharry, near Inverness. Simon's mother was a niece of the saintly Donald Maclean

(MacEanraic) who, on the death of her husband, took her and her young child to his own home.

It was a great privilege to be trained under the care of such a beautiful Christian character as MacEanraic, whose wise counsels, faithful and fatherly dealings and singularly consistent life made an indelible impression on the mind of his adopted son, and it must have gladdened the heart of the aged saint to see this boy in whom he was so much interested, growing up as a God-fearing youth. At a very early age he began to associate with the Lord's people, and to attend prayer-meetings, and so much were discerning Christians struck with his genuine piety that he was called to engage in prayer when he was only eighteen years of age.

The young man cherished feelings of the greatest veneration for the famous Alex. Vass, catechist of Ferintosh and Petty, having heard him on Communion occasions, and such was his desire to enjoy the society of that eminent Christian that he went all the way to Ferintosh on a sacramental occasion. Being a stranger in the place, he sought the catechist's house in Brae Findon, and great was his delight to find that he could be put up. When he entered, Vass, who had never seen him before, turned, and in his own fatherly way, addressed him, "Young lad, I think I have often seen you here." The good man had felt that the youth had often in spirit visited his dwelling and this the latter had to confess was true. He stayed with his kind host till the close of the solemn services on the Monday and ever carried fragrant memories of that Communion season.

Simon never forgot what he owed to his kind benefactor, Donald MacEanraic, under whose roof he stayed for so long, and when his first child was born he named him after him. Unfortunately death took away his first-born. The second was also called after Donald, but he too was taken away. After the death of this second child, Donald

enjoined the father not to call another of the family by his name, as long as he lived, but said that after his death he might do so. He also stated that it was his impression that the next child bearing his name would be the support of his father in his declining years. This was actually the case, for the son called Donald, when he grew up, emigrated to Australia and proved to be very mindful of his father as long as he lived.

Simon was of a gentle disposition and unassuming to a degree. In religious exercises he was calm and never tedious, and there was a ring of honesty about his words that at once struck the judicious hearer and convinced him of the speaker's sincerity. He could not tolerate any parade of religion, and disapproved of the habit of good men who continued to speak long at prayer and fellowship meetings. The last time he spoke in Creich was in August 1877. A man from Ross-shire who had the gift of ready utterance had spoken before him and on that occasion had occupied a long time in speaking. When Simon, who sat on the outskirts of the immense congregation was called, he rose and without lifting his head, simply said, "Carson 'tha sibh 'gairm air fear gun ghìbt, gun ghràs? Chuala mi bean àraidh 'g ràdh, nach labhradh fìor anam gràs-mhor deich faicil 'nuair a chuireadh e dheth a' stòl i, ach air son neach eile bhiodh i coimhead a labhradh e agus an cuireadh e cop cobhair mu 'bhus." ("Why call upon one without either gift or grace? I have heard a certain woman say that a gracious soul could not speak ten words without greatly moving her, but for anyone else she would be quite indifferent even should he speak until he was foaming at the mouth."), and then sat down.

As he sat from the early days at the feet of the fathers, and possessed a retentive memory, his mind was stored with most interesting reminiscences of the past which he could relate in a very striking way. He was of average height and well-proportioned. Age could not fade the rose of his

checks, and his luxuriant locks in their silvery white, imparted a venerable appearance which, when he rose to speak in his soft, pleasant voice, at once drew the eyes of strangers.

ALEXANDER MACINTOSH, STRATHCARNAIG

Alexander MacIntosh, Strathcarnaig, was a man of decided parts as well as of deep piety. His lively and sanctified imagination enabled him to express his thoughts on Divine things in a way that often arrested the attention and impressed the minds of such as heard him. On his last appearance at the Saturday prayer-meeting in the district, he made the following striking statement, "All men in passing to eternity had to cross a wide river with a bridge. Anyone could get over the broad stream by means of the bridge, but at the remote end of the bridge was a narrow stream with no bridge, nor way of crossing it save by three stepping stones and every one who did not make use of these would be carried down until he reached the deep and strong current. The three stones were (1) Let a man deny himself. (2) Take up his cross. (3) Follow me."

Before the next Saturday, Alasdair had crossed the stream. His wife, though not endowed with her husband's gifts, was one like-minded. Some years after Alasdair's death, Sheriff MacCulloch heard people refer to the above statement, but wishing to find the true version, he, when calling at the house of William Gunn, Proncy, asked his godly wife if she could supply him with the desired information. She stated that her husband who was then outside, was a greater authority on such matters, as he had a very retentive memory. When the Sheriff heard the statement of MacIntosh as repeated by William Gunn, he resolved to take it down there and then, but as there was no

ink in the humble cottage, he took out his pen knife and pricked his skin till he drew blood, with which he wrote down Alasdair's remarkable saying.

CATECHISTS OF DORNOCH

Andrew Munro lived during Dr. Bethune's ministry. He was an eminently godly man, wise, gentle and saintly, whose walk and conversation were a constant reproof of sin. His beautiful Christian life and earnest words lent peculiar weight to his labours as Catechist. His spirituality of mind and sanctity of life, his affectionate interest in the good of souls, and his judicious counsels gave him great influence among the people during a ministry in which the hearers were served with cold moral essays. He must have been no ordinary man who was looked up to with such veneration by his contemporaries—especially as in his day there were so many outstanding Christians in the parish—and whose name was so fragrant in succeeding generations.

Andrew Munro had a godly housekeeper called Ann. In Spring, when he was wont to cart away the manure, Ann used to slip away when waiting for his return from the field and spend the time in prayer. On one occasion when Andrew came back with the empty cart, he found Ann quite melted down. "Oh, Ann," he said, "how I envy you, for you are so melted, whereas I feel myself so hard when engaged in prayer." "Oh," said she, "if you get into the love of Christ, the hard heart must melt." At another time he said, in referring to these words, "Judge not that ye be not judged." "If everyone in the town of Dornoch kept his own door-step clean, the whole town would be clean."

Andrew was succeeded in office by James Matheson who for many years led the praises in the sanctuary. When in his prime he was considered the best precentor in the country. It is said that he inherited his musical gifts from

his mother who was a Calder. He had a son John, who was for some time precentor in one of the Glasgow churches. After his son had returned to his native parish, the father generally got him to precent in church at the English service. Once on a Saturday a young man of musical tastes called at James's house to see his son John, who sang to the visitor several times a tune which he had learned in Glasgow, but which his father had never heard. The old man was stretched on a bed resting himself while the son was singing. Next day, James, instead of vacating the precentor's desk as usual at the close of the Gaelic service to make way for his son to lead in English, kept his seat, and after the opening Psalm in the English service was read, he got up and coolly and correctly sang the tune, which he had heard for the first time from his son on the previous evening. On another occasion, while attending the Communion services in a neighbouring parish, James, who happened to be a little late, noticed as he drew near the congregation worshipping in the open air, that the precentor was beginning to flounder in the opening Psalm, and without waiting to sit down, he struck at once the proper notes and restored harmony to the service.

He had a son Thomas who was catechist in Golspie. James was succeeded by James Mackintosh or MacUisdein. Mackintosh was again succeeded by John Ross. After John Ross came Thomas Macbeth, a native of Kildonan. He was naturally an exceedingly amiable man, whose gentle winning manners had a special charm, even for the careless. His sound judgment and the unusual measure of sanctified common-sense with which he was blessed, helped him to act with great tact, not only in the discharge of his official duties, but in all his efforts for the advancement of God's cause. He could administer a rebuke very faithfully, but at the same time so wisely, that the reprovéd could seldom take offence and not infrequently respected him all the more for his seasonable admonitions.

His mental gifts beautifully harmonized, so that he was free from any striking angularity in the symmetry of his spiritual growth. He was scrupulously careful in all his movements, so much so that neither by act nor word nor gesture did he bring reproach on the Cause of Christ. In all his religious exercises, his words were weighty and well-chosen. His clear thinking and precise statements enabled him to be at once concise and instructive. His words were pregnant with meaning ; sometimes assuming the form of proverbs. David Ross, Evelix, once heard him ask a blessing when limited time called for brevity, and so expressive were his words and so impressive the tone in which they were uttered, that David remarked that one would not grudge to give sixpence for every word in the grace if it were necessary to pay for the privilege of hearing it. Thomas Macbeth died 18th August, 1859, aged 77. He was succeeded by Alexander MacIntosh—the last Catechist of Dornoch who for a short time acted in that capacity in Lairg. Though he did not know many of the people personally, yet the questions that he asked at the diets of catechizing very often led him to deal with the sins and infirmities of some present, although ignorant of their history. He died 12th June, 1870, aged 86 years.

CHAPTER IV

PARISH OF ROGART

ROBERT SUTHERLAND (MAC'URCHAIDH), ROGART

It will be generally admitted that among the "Men" of Rogart, an outstanding place must be assigned to Robert Sutherland or Mac'Urchaidh, as he was almost invariably called.

He lived in Dalreavoch in that portion of Strath Brora that lies in the eastern part of the parish of Rogart. From what tradition has to tell, he seems to have been a bright Christian of strong faith and holy walk. His love for the Gates of Zion was intense. It is said that on arriving at the church on Sabbath, he often touched with his staff the door by which he entered and as he did so, he was wont to repeat these words, "We have done as Thou has commanded. Do Thou as Thou hast promised."

On one occasion, he was preparing to leave home for a Communion, and, as he was dressing himself, one of his cows fell and seemed to be all but dead. His wife said to her husband, "It is of no use for you to think of leaving home at present for you must stay to flay the dead cow." Robert, who was in no way perturbed by this apparent hindrance which he regarded as a temptation from Satan, quietly took up his Bible and went to his private devotions. In coming to the door, he saw the cow stretched as if dead, and striking her with his foot, he addressed the Tempter (not the cow) and said, "Oh thou devil, get away out of that." Immediately the apparently lifeless animal sprang up and moved about as lively as usual.

Robert at one time was dealing with a Brora merchant from whom he had taken goods to the extent of 20/-.

After some time, the merchant began to press for payment, and, as Robert had not the cash in hand, he resolved to go to Brora to ask that further time might be given him for finding the money. On his way down the Strath, he retired to pray in Gordonbush Wood and when he came to the path, he saw what appeared to be silver coins to the amount of twenty shillings. The good man felt he had no right to take the silver and so he returned to the wood to resume his devotions. On his return, the tempting coins were still before him, but he would not handle them and the third time he went aside to pray. When he came back, he could find no trace of the silver pieces, but where they were spread, he saw an adder. After reaching Brora, he called on his creditor to whom he said that he had an opportunity of getting sufficient money to meet his debts, but that it would not prove a blessing to one that received it. "If that is so," the merchant replied, "I freely cancel the sum against you, for you shall never hear more about it."

Donald Mitchell, the godly catechist of Kilmuir, was once on his way to a Communion in Clyne and somewhere near the borders of the parish of Golspie, he saw a venerable-looking man resting at the roadside. It struck Mitchell that the old man was one of the many Sutherland worthies, and so to test him he saluted him thus:—"Rud nach 'eil, nach robh, 's nach bì." ("What is not, never was, and never shall be.") The old man at once replied, "Neach gun ath-bhreith ann an teaghlach m' athar." ("One who was never born again in my Father's family.") "Are you not Robert Mac'Urchaidh," said Mitchell. "That is so," replied the other.

On one Sabbath afternoon, as Robert was on his way from public worship, he saw two young men in the service of Captain Sutherland, Sciberscross, passing up the Strath. Robert accosted them and asked them where they were going on the Lord's Day. "Captain Sutherland has sent

us to look for his horses," the youths replied. "You go back, for this is the Lord's Day and not Captain Sutherland's and look for the horses in the morning." The young men returned at once, but when they reached Sciberscross, the Captain asked them why they had not brought the horses with them. The lads told him what Robert had said. The Captain was in a great rage and was determined to give expression to his displeasure when he should see him. Some time after this incident, the Captain was out shooting in the hill when he met Robert, and coming up to the saintly man in a towering passion, he roared out, "I have done worse things in my life than to give you the contents of my gun in the head." The man of God meekly replied, "You can carry out your threat if you like, but if you do so, remember I will be in Heaven before you can reach Sciberscross."

Robert during most of his Christian course, was a man of strong assurance. On one occasion, he stated to William Ross who was then teacher in Strath Brora, that he was assured of being soon in the "Father's house", and, as a sign that he would reach that place where there is fulness of joy, he said that his grave would be covered with snow on the day of his funeral. On another occasion, Robert remarked to some friends that Satan who had so often discharged his poisoned darts at him in life would continue to do so even after his death, but that he would never become his prey; and said he, "As proof that it shall be so, the Enemy will throw a bone of contention among the people in the burying-ground before my body is committed to the grave." In the month of May Robert died and as the weather was fine, young Ross was feeling very anxious, as there was no appearance of snow. The day of the funeral came and the people started from the house and still there was no likelihood of Robert's prediction being fulfilled. The procession wended their way along the banks of the river till they neared the burying-ground and

yet there was no snow though the clouds were gathering overhead.

On the arrival of the funeral at the burial ground, it was discovered that the grave had to be enlarged and as some of the men present thought that their ground was being encroached upon, there were angry words uttered, and some were even on the point of coming to blows before the dispute was settled. The wrangling occupied some time, and, as it was at its height, the frowning clouds above burst in a storm of great violence as if to reprove the disputants for their unseemly quarrel, and before the grave could be got ready to receive the coffin, the ground was white with snow. Thus the two predictions of the saintly man were verified to the letter. He died in 1792.

GEORGE MACKAY, KERROW, ROGART

George Mackay was a contemporary of Robert Mac'Urchaidh, Dalreavoch, though his junior by many years, and as the two men lived in adjacent townships, they had much intercourse with one another. With the exception of his godly neighbour, George was the most outstanding of all the "Men" of Rogart prior to the evictions. He was a man of deep and fervent piety, and an animated, eloquent and most popular Friday speaker.

Though as a blacksmith he was regarded as a most useful member of the community in forming the necessary iron implements then in use, yet he proved to be more helpful in being instrumental in moulding the lives of so many of the young men of the neighbouring district.

In the North in those days, the smithy was the place to which many resorted to hear the local news. George's workshop was no exception and it was the favourite meeting place of the youth of the Strath. Some no doubt were there on business and probably others came from a desire

to see their neighbours, but, generally speaking, the great attraction was the genial smith himself, who, it appears, had a most winning personality. With a heart that glowed like a furnace under the constraining power of Divine Love and with earnest desires for the higher interests of the young, he was active in seeking to advance their spiritual welfare. It was his aim to direct the conversation aright and to lead up eventually to the things that belonged to their peace.

Being blessed with no small measure of sanctified wisdom, he was not only faithful but tactful in dealing with the young. In a very happy way he could instruct or warn or counsel them. There was nothing that more gladdened his heart than for anyone in early life to give evidence of seeking the Kingdom of God. For such, he had a fatherly care and his kind and judicious treatment was very helpful to those who were turning their faces Zionward. We have already noticed how Angus Baillie of fragrant memory in the time of his soul distress found in the smith such a wise and tender nursing-father.

The exact date of his death is not known though he probably survived till near the time of the evictions.

The ruins of his cottage can still be identified near the river, and some years ago, the hollowed stone he used for making pot barley, and termed in local Gaelic—Clachchnocaig, could be seen near what was once his dwelling. It cannot now be located, being probably covered over with grass.

DONALD SUTHERLAND, ROGART

Donald Sutherland was a grandnephew of Robert Mac'Urchaidh. He was born in Craigton in the upper part of the valley of the Brora, though within the parish of Rogart.

It is not known what led to his first serious impressions. He seemingly was one of those quiet, gentle and good-living boys who, living in the atmosphere of a fine Christian home, in their early days turned their faces Heaven-wards. Probably it was true of him as of the great Covenanting preacher John Livingston that he could not remember the time in which he did not seek the Lord. It does not appear that he had the trying experience of Christian in the Slough of Despond, though he gave very clear evidence that at an early age he had set out on the way to Zion. As a young lad, he was present at the memorable Communion in Lairg when Mr. Macgillivray was assisted by his cousin, Dr. Angus Macintosh, Tain, who conducted the Gaelic services in Clais-nam-Buaile. Young Donald never forgot one of the impressive services he heard that day.

After his marriage, he lived in Tighcraig where he was employed as grasskeeper. As Donald sometimes attended Communion in the neighbouring parishes, the farmer, who was a very worldly man, dismissed him. He went to his minister, the Rev. Alex. Macleod, to tell him of his difficulties. "Do not be perturbed," said the minister, "for you shall have an earthly home, though another man should be removed to make room for you." Shortly after the interview, an old man in Morness was removed by death, and Donald got the croft, and there he ended his earthly pilgrimage. The croft was small, but Donald was an excellent weaver and his labours at the loom enabled him to bring up his family very respectably. He was an exceedingly attractive Christian and was a great favourite wherever he was known. Meek and gentle in his manner, young people were much drawn to him, for he was very accessible and spoke to them in a fatherly way. He also had a fund of reminiscences of bygone days which he introduced in a very interesting and instructive manner, and which made his society greatly prized. On Sabbath

morning, he was in the habit of leaving for the house of God at an early hour, and, as the slope above the Rogart Free Church was then thickly wooded, he used to spend a considerable time there at his private devotions. It was a most impressive sight to see this man of God enter the church slowly and reverently, his home-made plaid folded across his shoulder and its end hanging down at his back, while on his pleasant countenance, there rested a sweet solemnity which indicated that he was conversant with things unseen. He was admitted to the eldership during the ministry of Rev. Alex. Macleod, and so magnified his office that he was not designated by his occupation or place of residence but was always known as "Donald Sutherland the elder". At Fellowship meetings, he was not an animated speaker but was calm and deliberate, and, having a clear mind and being much given to meditation on the truths of God's Word, his remarks were always edifying.

Towards the close of his life, his eyesight became impaired so that he could not move much from home. Latterly he was confined entirely to bed. At the same time, an unmarried daughter—a very pious young woman—lay seriously ill in another room. When she passed away, the friends found it difficult to acquaint him with his bereavement, but when he was informed, all he said was, "It were good to be in her company." He did not long survive her. He was called to his rest at the age of 81 years. His son Robert, recently deceased, was an elder in the Free Church congregation, and at the same time a grandson was a member of the same Kirk-session.

JOHN SUTHERLAND, ROGART

John Sutherland, Claggin, who was a near relative of Donald Sutherland's father, was in Rogart church on the Sabbath after the Disruption of 1843, when the minister, Rev. John Mackenzie, intimated that he did not intend

to "come out." On this announcement, John rose up and left the building and was followed by the entire congregation to the sacramental meeting place in Coille Chranachaidh. The minister came after John to persuade him to return, but without avail. Afterwards a few individuals adhered to the Established Church.

John attended in rotation, all the Saturday private meetings of which there were four, in the parish. Once he come to Banschol, and on the way, he seemingly felt out of sorts and stretched himself face earthwards on the grass. His prayer that day was brief but very striking—"A Thighearna gléidh sinn bho fhuachd nam beann, agus bho ioma-chathadh nan cnoc, Deònich dhuinn a bhith 'gòl a uisgeachan sèimh Shiloh." ("Oh Lord preserve us from the cold of the mountains and from the snow-drifts of the hills. Grant unto us to drink of the quiet waters of Shiloh.")

This worthy man passed to his everlasting rest in December, 1845, aged 94 years.

MRS. DAVID MACKAY, TORBRECK, ROGART

Mrs. David Mackay was a very pious woman. Her maiden name was Christina Anderson. Her people belonged to Morayshire, but she was brought up in Rogart and acquired such a hold of the Gaelic language that she much preferred it to English. She lost her mother when very young. Her father married a second time and home life became to her unpleasant. At the early age of 15 years, she married David Mackay who predeceased her many years. She was much given to private devotions and was very consistent in her walk. A young girl in a neighbouring township on her death-bed was visited by one of the local elders who asked her whether she expected to recover. She told him that she did not think she was to have her health restored. He then enquired how she felt

in prospect of death. "Oh I have a good hope through grace." "And how did you begin to think seriously?" was his next question. "Well, when I was very young," she said, "I was herding with Granny Mackay, Torbreck, and I used to hear her so often in prayer that my mind became impressed."

Mrs. Mackay was a lover of good people. At the time of the Communion, her house used to be so full that the family had to sleep in the barn.

When she was on her death-bed, some worthies from the parish of Dornoch called to see her. They had been to hear Rev. Alex. Macleod, and in the evening, attended the meeting that used to be held in the house of the godly Robert Munro. From the meeting they came to see Mrs. Mackay and found her sinking. They proceeded to conduct family worship, when one of them said that, seeing the invalid was so weak, it might be out of place to sing beside her bed. Another of the company remarked, however, "Yes, we shall sing, for that is the exercise in which she shall be engaged throughout eternity." Some verses in Psalm 118 beginning with verse 19, "O set ye open unto me the gates of righteousness" were sung in which the dying woman joined with a clear voice. Not long after the worship was finished, she became unconscious and passed away to her rest early on Monday morning. Her death probably took place about the late fifties of last century.

MRS. ROBERT MACKAY, ROGART

Mrs. Robert Mackay's maiden name was Henrietta Gunn. She was familiarly known as Granny Croit a'Bhràigh'. She used to attend Commnions, not only in adjacent parishes but frequently as far afield as Ross-shire. Before coming to Morness where she and her husband died, they lived on Blairich, and previous to that in Morvich

Farm where her husband was employed as a ploughman. Once, when her child was only a few weeks old, she heard that the Communion was to be held in Killearnan and resolved to attend. Her husband, who was afraid that the long journey might overtax her strength, tried to dissuade her from leaving home, and when she still resolved to go, he, in his anxiety for her bodily health, locked up part of her apparel. But one day she got ready, took her infant and closed the door. She then went to the field where her husband was working and handing him the key, she said that though she loved him so ardently it was not at the cost of being kept from her duty to her Saviour that she became his wife. On hearing her words, he quite broke down, for he was a warm-hearted man and devotedly attached to his wife, and assured her that it was all out of consideration for her health that he had acted as he had done. He then suggested that she should return and that he would give her the part of her dress which he had hid. But the wife said that she would go as she was then attired and that if on her return either herself or the child should betray any signs of ill-health or fatigue, she would not venture again so far at a Communion.

On her way back when crossing Drynoch hill not very far from her home, instead of being exhausted, she actually felt her step more buoyant than at the beginning of her journey. As she entered the house, both she and her child appeared so lively that her husband never afterwards attempted to keep her from any Communion she wished to attend.

She was a woman of most pre-possessing appearance and a most attractive Christian character. She was a great favourite of Rev. Alex. Macleod. He visited her on her death-bed, and asked her, if she had her choice whether she would like to be spared or called away. "If I had my choice", she replied, "I would refer it back to the Lord." Her husband pre-deceased her many years.

MRS. ALEX. MURRAY, ROGART

Mary Murray was the wife of Alex. Murray and both were natives of Dornoch. When the family were young, they removed to Achnagarrin, Rogart. She was eminently pious and such were her attainments in the Christian life that she came to be known as "Bean Mhór Achnagarrin". She took a deep interest in the cause of the Redeemer in general, but what lay very near to her heart was the salvation of her family of seven sons. For this she wrestled most earnestly, and by faithful and loving counsel she endeavoured to win them for the Master. And how it must have rejoiced her heart to see one and then another give evidence of having surrendered to Him on whose Head are many crowns. Being persuaded that six of her sons had given their hearts to the Lord, she remained doubtful as to the case of the seventh, until one day she took him to a private room where she insisted on his engaging in prayer; and such were the sincerity and humility with which this youth poured out his heart that she was satisfied that he was one who had passed from death to life. Of the seven sons, four emigrated to Nova Scotia where they prospered. One of them, Donald, was the grandfather of the late Hon. G. H. Murray who was Premier of Nova Scotia for more than a quarter of a century. The other three sons remained in the old country; Alex., who succeeded his father in Achnagarrin, Angus who had a croft in Old Town in the heights of Rogart and Robert who lived in Dornoch. The three were men of decided piety, and it was something unusual to see, as was sometimes the case, the three brothers called to speak to the Question on the same day.

ALEX. MURRAY, ACHNAGARRIN, ROGART

Alex. Murray's father was one that feared God, and his mother "Bean Mhór Achnagarrin" (the great woman of Achnagarrin) was a Mother in Israel. Alex., while still a youth, became a subject of grace. It was through the instrumentality of Dr. Macdonald, Ferintosh, that the great change was effected. Towards the middle of Autumn in the year 1816, that honoured servant of Christ, when on his way to Caithness, was met by two excellent men who asked him if he would preach on a week day in the parish of Dornoch on his return. He stated that he would gladly do so, provided the parish minister, Dr. Bethune, would agree to their proposal. It was tentatively arranged that the service should be held at Clashmore, and intimation having been given to a number of parishes on both sides of the Dornoch Firth, an immense concourse assembled. At the appointed hour, Dr. Macdonald appeared, but though cheered by the sight of the great gathering, he was grieved to learn that Dr. Bethune would not permit him to preach within the bounds of the parish. But the difficulty that presented itself was soon overcome. Rev. Murdo Cameron, Creich, had come to hear the sermon, and as he saw how matters stood, he proposed that preacher and people should move westward to Riavag, which is the boundary between the parishes of Dornoch and Creich, and that Dr. Macdonald could stand on Creich soil while the hearers who were not interdicted could sit on the Dornoch side of the boundary. Mr. Cameron's suggestion was at once acted upon.

The service was a memorable one. Dr. Macdonald was then in full vigour of mind and body. The sea of expectant faces before him was an inspiration, while the prayerful spirit of the many lively Christians in the audience, created a most helpful atmosphere; but, above all, the rich unction from the Holy One resting upon him gave him special uplifting for the work of the day. Know-

ing that many of his hearers hailed from parishes which were not blessed with an earnest Gospel ministry, he realized that he was now favoured with a precious opportunity of setting life and death before them. His heart was so fired with love to Christ and intense yearning for the salvation of souls that his words fell on the congregation like burning shot. The sermon was one of extraordinary power. Such was the preacher's energy in the delivery that the mark of his feet in the ground where he stood could be seen for some years afterwards ; but even more permanent were the impressions which his fervent appeals had left on many hearts. It is said that individuals from all the parishes represented had been awakened, and among the number was young Alex. Murray—then a lad of 17 years—who was so overcome that he had to be carried out of the vast assembly. Some think that the address that day was one of the very greatest that had ever been delivered by the "Apostle of the North". Alexander's after-life gave clear evidence that on that day, the Gospel had come to him not in the letter only, but in power. We do not know whether he had been long in the Slough of Despond, but like Christian, he got out of it on the side remote from the City of Destruction.

Alex. married in 1830 Catherine Mackay, a woman of kindly disposition and sincere piety, who it may be stated was a great grand-daughter of the famous John Mackay, Dola. They had a family of ten, one of whom it is said was the first child baptized by the worthy Mr. Alex. Macleod after his induction. The infant was called Margaret after Mrs. Macleod. She gave evidence of being like the pious lady whose name she bore, one that knew the grace of God in truth. For some time she occupied a situation in Manchester where she was suddenly struck down while still at her duties and called to join them that serve God "day and night in His temple".

The good man had no little share of "the troubles

that afflict the just". A son, Adam, a deeply pious youth, was employed in a London office. He contracted a cold which so clung to him that he went North for the benefit of his native air. Notwithstanding all the care of a loving mother, his ailment developed into a decline. But as the outward man was wasting the inward man was renewed day by day. In his illness he enjoyed so much of the Lord's presence that he longed to depart. At the early age of 20 years, but ripe for glory, he was translated to that place where the inhabitant shall not say, "I am sick."

The eldest son, Alexander, was one that feared the Lord from his boyhood. He studied for the ministry, and after being licensed, he was for a short time an assistant in the Free Church of Tain. While there, he received and accepted a call from the Free Church Congregation of Dalry. Shortly after his ordination, he caught a chill and for the benefit of his health, he returned to his old home, but his ailment continued and in a few months he was called away to engage in the service of the "Upper Sanctuary". His was a very beautiful sunset, for as he drew near the close of his pilgrimage, he was in a very exultant frame of mind. It is said that a few minutes before the end, he raised up his right hand and repeated the opening words of the 103rd Psalm, "O thou my soul bless God the Lord," and as if pronouncing the Benediction, he passed into the enjoyment of his everlasting rest.

At the time of his decease, his worthy mother was on her death-bed, but she expressed the desire to see the remains of her beloved son. Gazing on his wasted face, she indicated her submission to God's providential dealings, by softly uttering the words:—"I have no wish now to keep him out of Abraham's bosom."

A third son, William, who was being trained in Glasgow for the teaching profession, had to discontinue his studies owing to ill-health. He passed away about eleven days before his mother and like his brothers who had been

called home, he gave very clear evidence that his citizenship was in Heaven. At the age of 24 years, he was called to join them in glory.

But such sore and frequent bereavements were blessed to this afflicted man, for they were as the refiner's fire, in which his graces were tried, so that they shone with a greater lustre. Judicious Christians noticed how after passing through such experiences, he exhibited a weanedness from the world, and a marked Heavenly-mindedness. He was ordained as an elder several years before the death of Mr. Macleod. One of his distinguishing characteristics as a Christian was his prayerful spirit. Though for more than twenty years he had the privilege of sitting under the edifying ministry of Mr. Macleod, yet he had special delight in the exercises of private devotions. Another striking trait was his unfeigned humility. Such a lowly estimate of himself had he that for some years he could not be prevailed upon to lead in devotional exercises in public, especially if other professing Christians were present. Latterly he overcame this feeling to a certain extent, for along with his brother Angus and Turnbull Murray, he took part in conducting a weekly prayer-meeting in Culdrain F.C. School. On a Communion occasion, he as was his wont, extended hospitality to a number of the Lord's people, and among them was that "mother in Israel", Widow Joseph Ross. One night the strangers insisted that their host should lead in prayer at the family altar. After worship was over, one of the guests said to Alexander, "I'm afraid Granny Ross has not heard your prayer." The other gave a characteristic answer, "Oh perhaps that was just as well."

As a man, he was frank, genial and so very approachable that even young people were drawn to him, for he had a kindly word for all.

He passed to his everlasting rest in 1874 at the age of 75 years.

ANGUS MURRAY, ROGART

Angus Murray, Old Town, was a brother of the above-mentioned Alexander whose junior he was by about two years. He seems to have been one that began to seek the Lord in his early years. The example of his godly parents was fitted to direct his mind to Heavenly things, and the atmosphere of the home was favourable for the nurture of quickened souls. Though he was not brought so near to the terrors of Sinai as some of the Lord's people, yet he gave clear evidence that he was translated into the "kingdom of God's dear Son".

As a young man he was for some years in Glasgow, and possessing not a little of the musical talents of the Murrays to whom he belonged, he acted as precentor in one of the Gaelic congregations in the city. After his return from the south he could not find much edification in the parish church, but the Disruption brought with it the dawn of a brighter day. In 1846, the Rev. A. Macleod was inducted as Free Church Minister of Rogart, and in his hand the trumpet gave forth no uncertain sound. Sinners were faithfully warned, and the Lord's people were fed with "the finest of the wheat". Angus became devotedly attached to his new pastor, by whom he was ordained as a member of the Kirk Session at an age when few in that part of the country were admitted to the eldership. In addition to his own revered minister, two of his favourite preachers were the saintly Mr. Kennedy, Killearnan, and Mr. Finlay Cook. As already stated, Angus had a fine voice of great compass. He once precented at the Brora Communion when the congregation met on the Links at Lower Brora. Donald Sutherland, Morness, was on his way to the service, and was a few minutes late in arriving from Rogart. As he was crossing Brora bridge, the service had just begun, and there Donald recognised the voice of Angus Murray "chanting the line".

Angus was not one that showed much of the Celtic fire, for in his religious exercises he was cool, clear and orderly. As a Friday speaker he never rambled, but was very logical in his remarks.

As an elder he was very mindful of the sick, even when they lived in somewhat secluded parts of the parish. There was nothing morose about him, and when in congenial society he could engage in innocent banter. In person he was slightly above the average height and of venerable appearance. He had a well-formed frame, and a head covered with a thick shock of hoary hair. He was always neatly attired. His last illness was comparatively short. He caught a chill which resulted in inflammation of the lungs. Though his friends did not get alarmed until about three days before his decease, he seemed to realize that he was not to recover, for he said so to his fellow elder, Turnbull Murray, who had called to see him. His minister happened to be away at the herring-fishing at the time, but in his absence his pulpit was supplied by a young probationer, who visited him. He asked the aged father on what his hope was based. "My hope", said the latter, "rests on the sacrifice." He finished his course at the advanced age of 83 years in 1884. His wife predeceased him some years, but he was survived by all the members of the family.

CHAPTER V

PARISH OF LAIRG SOME MINISTERS AND MEN

REV. JOHN MACKAY, M.A., LAIRG

THE Parish of Lairg was highly favoured in having secured the services in 1714 of John Mackay, one of the most outstanding ministers in the North of Scotland. He seems to have been raised up by the Head of the Church for special service, for he was eminently fitted for carrying on his official duties in the time when he lived and in the fields where he laboured.

By birth he was connected with some of the leading families in the Northern Highlands. His father, Captain Wm. Mackay, Durness, belonged to the Scourie branch of Mackays and was cousin to General Mackay who fought at Killiecrankie. Captain William fought at the Battle of Worcester. His son John, who was born in 1680, inherited the martial spirit of his race, and, had he chosen the army as his profession, would in all probability have had a distinguished military career, for he was a man of great energy and dauntless courage. But at an early age he became the subject of saving grace, and resolved to devote his life to the service of the Prince of Peace.

It was firmly believed in Sutherland that young Mackay was about that time privileged to come into touch with that notable servant of Christ, Mr. Thomas Hogg of Kiltearn, whose singularly holy life and fatherly counsels made a lasting impression upon him, a fact which later

on in life appeared in his calling one of his sons by the Christian name of his benefactor.

His educational course was entered upon at Edinburgh University and later on was continued at Utrecht, and at both places he proved himself to be an able student. He was ordained minister of Durness in 1708. The duties to which the newly settled pastor had to address himself were of such an arduous nature as to demand all his energies. His parish, which embraced practically all Lord Reay's policies, stretching from the River Borgie on the one side to Glencoul on the borders of Assynt on the other, was larger than some counties. But for such a field, the young minister was admirably fitted. He had a gigantic frame which served him in good stead in many a long journey, while his fearless spirit never failed him in administering faithful reproof when he saw it his duty to do so. His earnest piety too, marking him out as a true servant of God, inspired his people with respect, both for himself and for his ministry.

On one occasion when engaged in catechizing the families of his extensive parish, he asked the owner of the house in which the people were assembled whether all belonging to the household were present. "Oh yes," was the reply, "All are here except a half-witted lad who looks after the cattle, but I did not think it necessary to call him in." "Oh send for him," said the minister, "for he has a soul." Presently the lad appeared. When it came to his turn to be examined, the minister asked him whether he had a soul. "Oh no, I have not," said the youth. Instead of feeling disconcerted by such an apparently unhappy answer, the minister enquired, "Have you ever had a soul?" "Oh yes, that I had," was the reply. "And what has become of your soul?" was the next question, to which the very striking reply was given. "I was once out herding and I felt my soul had become sick, for the pains of hell took hold of me. I soon found that I could not

do anything for my soul, so I gave it over to Jesus and left it in his keeping ; and, oh, Minister, that is what I meant when I said that I had no soul."

Strong though Mr. Mackay was, the arduous and exacting duties of such an extensive parish preyed upon his energies to such an extent that his translation to Lairg in 1714 was truly welcome. In his new sphere of labour, there was a certain laxity in the life of the community which called for the imposition of a restraint which the new minister was well fitted to give. Sabbath profanation and other irregularities he set himself resolutely to suppress, and sometimes he did not hesitate to do so literally with a strong hand. One Sabbath Day, when he had gone to Shinness to preach, he came upon one of his parishioners engaged in shoemaking. The man happened to be cutting a piece out of a large hide of home-tanned leather just as the minister was passing. The latter rebuked him and bade him desist from such work on the Lord's day ; but the other, a man of powerful physique, at first refused, whereupon the minister seized hold of the leather to wrench it from his grasp. The shoemaker, however, held tight, and in the struggle the piece was torn asunder. This evidence of the power of the minister's iron grasp at once gave him a place in the esteem of this knight of St. Crispin which nothing else could.

Another tradition shows that the minister of Lairg was not prepared to mince matters in the exercise of discipline. There was a conceited individual in the neighbourhood of the name of Robert Sutherland who caused no little trouble to the minister and his elders. On account of a glaring case of drunkenness in which he laid violent hands upon one of his neighbours, he was cited to a meeting of Kirk Session. He duly appeared, but adopted a defiant attitude and refused to express regret or to promise any reformation of his ways. The elders were greatly perturbed, but the fearless pastor made up his mind how to act. Turning to

the delinquent, he calmly said, "Robert, will you meet me to-morrow afternoon where I generally go out for a walk that I may have a further talk with you about this matter." Sutherland replied that he was quite willing to meet the minister when and where he liked. Next day the meeting took place beside Loch Shin. For some time the minister reasoned with Sutherland as they walked to and fro by the water's edge but all in vain. Braggart though he was, the minister had an idea that Robert might not prove so obstinate under every circumstance, so seeing it was futile to argue any longer, he quietly said, "Robert can you swim?" "Not a stroke" was the reply. This was enough for the minister, and, seizing Robert by his coat collar, he plunged with him into the loch, and, still retaining his grasp, swam across to an islet about seventy yards from the shore. Before returning, the minister said to his refractory parishioner, "Now you see what your contumacy has brought upon you. When you are disposed to submit to discipline, let me know, for I can hear your cry at the Manse, and the ferry boat will be sent for you; but till then no boat will come near you. Meantime take as much exercise as you can lest you catch cold." As the minister swam back, the man on the island hurled abuse after him and threatened to bring him before the civil and ecclesiastical courts. By and by matters developed just as the minister had anticipated. Robert knew that a neighbouring pool was reputed to be the haunt of the water-horse and all the tales he had heard since boyhood came trooping into his mind; the thought of spending the night there was more than he could endure. In the calm of the evening, there came from the islet a shout, not of defiance, but in tones which bespoke the feelings of a very different kind, "Mr. Mackay, oh do take me from this terrible place. I am willing to submit to your terms, and I faithfully promise never to give you or the Session any further trouble."

The treatment meted out to Sutherland made such an impression upon the community that it invested the minister with an authority which few cared to dispute. Nevertheless, despite an apparent imperiousness in his attitude to his people, he had their best interests at heart and ever strove to persuade them to abstain from all appearance of evil and to follow that which is good. Nor were his efforts fruitless, for in a few years a pleasing change was to be seen in the ways and life of the community, while the church became thronged. Mr. Mackay was an earnest and faithful preacher of the Evangel and his efforts were owned in the conversion of souls. Besides the regular services of the sanctuary, diets of catechizing were well attended and family-worship became general.

Mr. Mackay was a good classical scholar and gave valuable assistance to promising lads in the earlier stages of their studies, so much so that the Manse of Lairg became a veritable "school of the sons of the prophets".

A few of Mr. Mackay's sermons are still in MS. They are, as might be expected, thoroughly evangelical, and in construction and substance they resemble the discourses of that eminent divine, Mr. Thomas Boston of Ettrick.

Mr. Mackay finished his course on 23rd February, 1753, in the seventy-third year of his age and the forty-sixth of his ministry. His wife Catherine was a woman of decided and ardent piety, the worthy helpmeet of a godly husband.

REV. THOMAS MACKAY, LAIRG

Rev. John Mackay was succeeded as minister of Lairg by his only surviving son who was always referred to in the vernacular as Maighstir Tomás, i.e., Mr. Thomas, to distinguish him from his eminent father. In several respects he was very unlike his father. He was under ordinary height and slimly built and his health was often indifferent, while he was of a nervous cast of mind.

Although not in his views of Divine truth, as a preacher he differed from his father, lacking the animation and fervency of appeal of the latter. But his discourses were always well-prepared and were delivered in a subdued but most impressive manner. He dealt with the cardinal doctrines of grace systematically and treated his subject very fully, frequently having a series of sermons on the same text. Among these calling for special mention was a series preached towards the close of his ministry from the concluding verses of Psalm 73. As a pastor, the people received him kindly, for he was a sympathetic friend and wise counsellor, while his grave deportment and undoubted piety won for him the respect of all. A good knowledge of medicine, a distinct advantage to ministers in those days, helped still further to make his visits to sick-beds especially welcome.

In the course of a few years, his name came to be favourably known among godly people not only in the neighbouring parishes but beyond the bounds of the Presbytery, with the result that many seekers and believers harassed by the wiles of the adversary found their way from these parts to the crowded services of the church of Lairg. To such the instructive and experimental preaching of Mr. Thomas was singularly helpful.

There is an interesting tradition which illustrates this. In Rosskeen there lived a certain John Munro who came under deep religious convictions in his early manhood. Having heard much in regard to the value of the ministrations of the worthy minister of Lairg, he came to the conclusion that were he given the opportunity of hearing him, he was sure to be brought to the liberty of the Gospel. At length he formed a firm resolution to make a pilgrimage to distant Lairg, and neither the length nor the roughness of the way could deter this earnest enquirer after salvation from carrying out his purpose. Accordingly on the evening of a Saturday in mid-summer, he set out on his long journey

and reached the church of Lairg as the people were gathering for worship. Great was his disappointment to find that the minister was conducting a service for the Shinness crofters at the shielings at Bad Griam whither many of the people had gone a few weeks previously to feed their cattle upon the summer grazings. Despite the distance which he had already covered, the spiritual ardour of the young man was so keen that his first impulse was to set out at once in the hope of being able to reach Loch Griam-side before the close of Mr. Mackay's sermon. This, he was told, owing to the distance, he could not possibly do. Very reluctantly, therefore, and with a sore heart, he joined the assembled people in the church. In the absence of the minister the elders conducted a prayer-meeting. Despite the unoccupied pulpit, the young stranger soon began to realize that the "Minister of the Sanctuary" was present, for so remarkably warm became the atmosphere of the meeting, so expressive of his felt wants were the petitions offered, and with such power, light and comfort did the Psalms sung and the portions read come to his heart that at last, as he was afterwards wont to relate, all thought of Mr. Mackay passed from his mind; for, like the apostles on the mount, he saw "Jesus only". That memorable Sabbath day in the old church of Lairg he could never forget. He had come in a prayerful frame of mind, looking for a spiritual blessing through a certain channel. In his expectation, he was not disappointed; the blessing was as abundant as he could desire, but it came to him in another way than he expected. This promising young man continued to walk humbly with his God and honoured his profession with a life of Gospel conformity.

Mr. Thomas had on one occasion the assistance of the famous Mr. Hector Macphail of Resolis at his Communion. In conducting the Gaelic service in the open air in the historic hollow of Clais-nam-Buaile, Mr. Macphail gave utterance to the following striking remark:—"If you were

to see a little spark down in yonder loch, would it not be wonderful should it continue to exist in the midst of the waters? But more wonderful still would it be were the little spark to dry up the loch. Such is the little spark of grace in the lake of the soul's pollution, for instead of its being quenched, it shall yet dry up all that pollution in the soul."

Mr. Thomas once visited the Communion at Ardersier, a place to which he had never been before, and preached with such effect that his services made a great impression. On his return journey, he crossed Fort George Ferry, and, on entering the boat, he sat in the prow and covered himself with a large Highland plaid which completely hid his clerical attire. Passengers began to drop into the boat and with some of them the subject of conversation was the Ardersier Communion. One who had not been present at the services enquired of a companion as to who were the assisting ministers. The answer was given in complete ignorance of the identity of the figure enwrapped in the capacious folds of the plaid:—"Bha bodachan beag againn a Cataibh, agus dheànadh e fhéin òrdugh." ("We had a little man from Sutherland, and he himself would suffice for a Communion.")

The death of his wife, who was a woman of deep piety, in the year 1773, aroused the sympathy of the community. Kind relatives at a distance offered to take charge of his motherless children, but a warm-hearted couple of fully fourscore years insisted on having the two eldest boys in their own cottage which stood near the manse so that they might be able to visit their father at least once a day and so to cheer his now desolate home. The elder boy, many years afterwards, touchingly referred to worthy George MacDonald and his wife, "They were the quintessence of old-fashioned kindness, and not even now, after a lapse of sixty years, can I recollect the kindness of both without emotion."

A little more than a year after his partner in life had been called away, he was visited with another severe trial in the loss of his byre and thirty-five head of fine cattle by fire. The neighbours flocked to the scene of the outbreak and among them was the son of the worthy couple who had taken the minister's boys to their home. Almost his first words were, "Come neighbours, we must build another byre for the worthy man and stock it as soon as we can." And his words were not ignored, for in a very short time the parishioners got the byre re-built and stocked it from their own herds.

Though Mr. Mackay's superior gifts and studious habits were a good equipment for the work of the pulpit, yet it was especially his devotional spirit that gave such weight to his preaching. His bereavements were blessed to him in weaning his affections from the world and drawing him nearer to the God of all consolations, which may explain how the "secret of the Lord" was sometimes made known to him. In this connection the following anecdote may be related.

One Sabbath, he heard that a good man in Gruids was ill, and, at the close of Public Worship, he expressed the desire that two of the elders should visit him and call at the manse on their return. The men readily agreed and soon made their way to the house. The sick man's ailment, however, was of such a nature that his mind was affected, and when the elders reached the house, he was raving. Judging that worship under such circumstances could not be conducted to edification owing to the shouting of the invalid, they came away without engaging in prayer. On their arrival at the manse to report as to the outcome of their visit, the minister was very displeased at their failure to engage in prayer. "What!" he cried, "You are indeed brave soldiers to neglect your duty for such a reason. The man was not responsible for his talk, and Satan was seeking to take advantage of it by endeavouring

to show that the dying man was one of his subjects ; but before you had crossed the ford at Cashel his soul was in glory." It was afterwards ascertained that the man had passed away before the elders could have reached the river.

In 1797, Mr. Mackay, who was then in his eightieth year, preached his last sermon—a seasonable and most consoling discourse from those words of Job, " Shall we receive good at the hands of the Lord and shall we not receive evil? " When unable to appear in the pulpit, he still continued to take a prayerful interest in the people, many of whom he had known from their infancy.

Mr. Thomas finished his course on 20th August, 1803, in the eighty-sixth year of his age and fifty-fourth of his ministry. He died in the full assurance of a glorious resurrection.

REV. DUNCAN MACGILLIVRAY, LAIRG

The subject of our sketch was born in the heights of Strathdearn and was a cousin of Dr. Angus MacIntosh of Tain. After receiving the rudiments of his education in his native parish, he proceeded to King's College, Aberdeen, and duly graduated. From his youth he was seriously minded and was regarded by judicious persons of his native strath as a most promising young man.

In 1802, he was appointed by the Royal Bounty Society to the mission at Achness in Strathnaver, and there he married Jean, daughter of Robert Gordon, tacksman of Achness. He removed to the extensive parish of Assynt in 1813, but four years later he was translated to Lairg in room of Rev. A. Kennedy who had been presented to Dornoch.

Mr. MacGillivray was a sound divine and could state the fundamentals very tersely and correctly. His preaching

partook largely of the didactic, yet it was strongly hortatory. In the pulpit, although his mien was calm, yet his appeals were earnest and solemnizing, and some of his hearers long remembered how he used to call to the stones and beams of the church to witness that he was setting life and death before his audience. In those days, it might well have been said of the old church of Lairg, "This man and that man there was born".

At one particular sermon, four persons, who afterwards gave unmistakable evidence of having passed from death to life, were savingly awakened. One of these was a Christina MacDonald of Pluid, near Achany. A good woman who knew her well used to remark, "I never knew one who spent more time in private devotions".

On one occasion, Mr. MacGillivray had his relative, Dr. Angus MacIntosh, to assist him at his Communion and a memorable time it was. Seldom or never was a larger concourse of people gathered in Clais-nam-Buaille than was witnessed on that Communion Sabbath morning. Five tables were necessary to accommodate all the communicants who were present, so since each table seated sixty persons in all about three hundred partook of the sacrament. Considering how few are the communicants in proportion to the ordinary Gospel hearers in the Northern Highlands, the number gathered that day in the open air must have been immense.

Three of Mr. MacGillivray's sons were preachers. The eldest, called Angus, after the famous minister of Tain, was the first to be settled in the Quoad Sacra charge of Strathy. The next, Robert, was a licentiate, but he never had a settled charge. He was a pious young man, but of delicate health. On several occasions he preached with much acceptance from his father's pulpit. His sudden death during his father's absence at the Strathy Communion cast a gloom upon the whole community, for he was greatly loved by the people.

A young girl named Margaret Matheson, still in her teens, who had been impressed under the preaching of Mr. Robert, was greatly solemnized when she heard of his unexpected decease. Very shortly after his funeral, she stole out quietly from her father's cottage to the grave of the departed saint, not only to weep but to pray beside the newly made grave of one who, though young in years, was her spiritual father. As the stars of Heaven began to appear, she knelt down in the solitude and made an entire surrender of herself to the Lord. A pious and consistent Christian life even unto old age was the evidence of the reality of what she had transacted with the Lord that evening.

The third son, Alexander, was ordained as colleague and successor to his father. He came out from the Church of Scotland at the Disruption. For years the Free Church people had to worship in a canvas tent at the foot of Claisnam-Buaile. During this period, Mr. MacGillivray accepted a call to Dairsie, Fife, and was succeeded by Rev. John Macpherson. Soon thereafter the present Free Church was erected on Achany Estate and opened by Dr. MacDonald, Ferintosh.

Meanwhile, the aged Mr. MacGillivray had been called upon to share the trials of the Free Church ministers at the Disruption. Being forced to vacate the manse, he was invited by a married daughter who lived in a small cottage in the parish to share her limited accommodation. The aged father had not been long there when she received notice from one of the estate officials intimating that if she continued giving shelter any longer, the result would be ejection from her dwelling. The dutiful daughter did not hesitate in choosing the latter alternative, and the venerable minister removed to Fife where he passed to his everlasting rest.

REV. JOHN NOBLE, LAIRG

Mr. Noble was a native of Ferintosh and was nurtured in a fine Christian home. His father, who was an elder of the Free Church in that historic parish, was a worthy man, upright and thoroughly transparent, while his mother was a consistent and humble Christian.

As a young lad, he served in a drapery business in Dingwall, where, at the impressionable stage, he came under the influence of that prince of Highland preachers, Dr. John Kennedy, with the result that eventually he decided to study for the ministry. He attended Edinburgh University where he took a high place in English Literature. After receiving licence, he assisted Rev. James Ross, Durness, for a period, and also Rev. Donald Murray, Tarbat, and in 1885 he was ordained in the Free Church of Lairg.

That his preaching soon began to tell became manifest, not only in the increased attendance of the people, but in the marked attention which they gave to the message. Their new minister was a man of very powerful intellect, and his well-prepared discourses clearly showed his exceptional mental equipment. To the cardinal truths of the Gospel he gave great prominence.

He was conversant with the religious life and tradition of Ross-shire, and he had a store of the striking sayings of the outstanding ministers and men of his native county, and these he frequently made use of in a very edifying way in his discourses. In the early years of his ministry, while Mr. Noble stood high as an able doctrinal preacher, an intelligent hearer might perhaps be more struck with the decidedly great mental ability evinced in the preparation of the sermon than with the tenderness of its delivery; although even then his deep-toned but pleasant voice lent no little attraction to his well-studied addresses; but

latterly he mellowed considerably, and the experimental note, though not lacking before, became very prominent in his preaching.

About two years before his lamented death, the writer heard him in Stornoway when he delivered an action sermon in Gaelic in the open air to an immense congregation, among whom were many of the outstanding Christians of the island. His text was, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, Thy will be done". (Matt. 26, 42.) The sermon was one of extraordinary power. Not only were the great doctrines of substitutionary atonement handled in a masterly fashion, but the weighty truths which he delivered, and which were the embodiment of sublime thought seemed to have deeply touched his own heart. Some of the most discerning of the fathers present stated that the address in some respects reminded them of Rev. John Macrae, *MacRath Mór*—one of the giant preachers of a former generation. He enjoyed that Communion immensely for he found it a time of refreshing to his own soul.

In the pulpit he generally began on a very low tone, scarcely audible to the more distant of his audience, but as he warmed up he became exceedingly lively both in voice and gesture, a characteristic of the latter being a vigorous use of the index finger to emphasize his leading points. One can recall how his voice gradually rose, especially in Gaelic, when introducing some important thought by way of contrast, and how he gave utterance like a trumpet blast to the transitional words, "ach gidheadh" ("but yet"), and at the same time threw his arms forward impetuously as if to give additional emphasis to what he desired to impress upon the minds of his hearers.

Being widely read and well informed, he was a most interesting conversationalist and was gifted with a most striking way of expressing himself. Some of his phrases could not be forgotten, for they stuck to the memory like

burrs. In controversy he was one with whom few cared to cross swords for his sarcasm was withering. This power served him well in the controversial days before and after the Union of 1900, and he took a leading part in addressing meetings throughout the Northern Highlands and Islands.

He catechized his congregation yearly and he considered this a part of his duties which was most profitable to his people and refreshing to himself.

Mr. Noble was a man of marked force of character and exercised no little authority in his congregation. Not a few of them were afraid of him, for although he had a warm heart and an affectionate disposition, to those who did not know him well, he appeared stern and unbending. That he left his impress very markedly upon his hearers is very evident, for when a stranger signifies his approval of a certain course, the frequent rejoinder still is, "That is not what Mr. Noble used to do".

He passed to his everlasting rest on 31st January, 1908. A great concourse from his own and surrounding parishes followed his remains to the churchyard of Lairg.

JOHN MACKAY, LAIRG

A worthy contemporary of William Munro was John Mackay, Dola, or Ian MacRob Bhàin as he was better known. He was a man not only of decided piety, but of rare tact and sanctified commonsense. His like-minded wife was Mary Graham, a sister of the famous John Graham of Ardcloch.

A good man of the name of Sutherland who lived in the heights of Rogart was a frequent hearer of Mr. Thomas Mackay. As he had to pass Dola on his way to and from church, he generally walked home with John Mackay who always invited him to dinner. One Sabbath evening after Sutherland had rested, his host, as usual, escorted him a

short distance, and then the two stood for some time conversing about the discourse to which they had listened. When John had returned to his cottage after parting with Sutherland, his wife said to him, "You have spent a very considerable time with your friend." "Oh, well, my dear," said John, "you shall spend far more time with him than I have done, for you are yet to be his wife." The good man's words proved true.

The exact date of his death is not known. His wife survived her second husband and died 18th March, 1815, aged 80 years.

ALEXANDER GRAHAM, LAIRG

Alexander Graham, the miller at Milinclarin, was one of the outstanding men of the parish. He was a brother of Mary Graham already referred to, and was a man of great weight of character and of rare insight into spiritual things. It is well known that he often stated that a church would yet be built on the hillock where he used to deposit the corn husks, and that it would eventually be utilized as a stable. The first part of the prediction has undoubtedly been fulfilled, for the present Established Church stands upon the very spot indicated by the miller, though it was not erected till practically a quarter of a century after his death. Some of the old people invariably referred to the church as "Eaglais a' Chnuic-Sgilidh", i.e., the church of the husk-hill.

He had great influence over the young, and, when they had occasion to go to the mill on business, he availed himself of the opportunity to direct their minds in a tactful way to the eternal verities. He was very popular with all classes, as was shown by the attendance at his funeral which was one of the largest seen in the parish since the death of the Rev. Thomas Mackay.

Alexander Graham died on the 20th July, 1819, aged 82, and is buried in Kincardine Churchyard. No stone marks his grave.

ANGUS GUNN, LAIRG

Angus Gunn, Balchàrn, was a native of the parish, although his forebears are said to have hailed from Kildonan, the cradle of the Gunns of Sutherland. He was a catechist, having been appointed in 1806 upon the recommendation of Mr. Angus Kennedy, the parish minister. Angus was greatly respected for his amiable disposition, unblemished character, and high-toned piety, all of which made him a most attractive Christian and gave him much influence for good in the parish.

His great prayerfulness, his intense delight in God's Word, and his ardent love for the services of the sanctuary were very prominent features in his spiritual life. Being endowed with more than ordinary talents, he was able to give the outcome of his meditations upon Divine truth in a fresh and instructive way, both in speaking at Fellowship Meetings and in taking part in his work as a catechist. In emphasizing the exhaustless treasures of Scripture, he remarked that in the case of a worldly commodity, the more it is dispensed, the smaller it becomes, but with regard to the Word of God, the more one partakes of it, the greater it appears.

The Rev. Alexander MacGillivray, Dairsie, who was well acquainted with this godly man, has in the following reference cast light upon his close walk with God:—"An old man was for the first time confined to bed whilst the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was being dispensed in the parish. I knew him well and I cannot help naming him for I owe him much. His name was Angus Gunn, the worthy catechist of Lairg, my father's parish. Calling on

him one evening during the Communion, I found his mind exercised with these words, 'Come with me, my love, from Lebanon!' He remarked that Lebanon was the mountain of delights, and, on my asking what he meant, he spoke as follows:—'I have been deeply exercised all this day. It is not any doubt I have of my interest in Christ. God has made that very clear to me—it were ungrateful to deny it. But I have been putting the question, Why am I confined to this bed on the Communion week whilst my brethren have gone up to the mount of ordinances? I could call to witness that I took delight in his ordinances and these words impressed me as if they said, 'Come with *ME*, my love, from the mountains of delights; you must learn the lesson, to live on Christ alone without the public ordinances.'"

His death took place in 1830 at the age of 75 years to the great grief of the community. He had a son, Donald, a pious man and an elder in the Free Church, and several daughters. A number of his descendants are still to be found in the parish. One of the private Saturday prayer-meetings was kept for many years in the cottage which Angus occupied and was continued, not only during the tenancy of his son, but even later, for until the late seventies of last century, the meeting was still held. It was the last of such on that side of the parish.

JOHN MACKINTOSH, LAIRG

For some years before his decease, Angus Gunn had associated with him in the office of catechist, a very eminent Christian—John Mackintosh, more commonly known in the vernacular as Iain Mór Macantòisich (Big John Mackintosh). He was Iain Mór not only on account of his stature, but because of his exceptional spiritual attainments. He was a native of Strath Kyle in the parish of Creich.

As a boy, he was very frolicsome, and when attending the Sabbath services in the mission house in Rosehall, he considered it fine enjoyment to get down under the rude benches upon which the people sat and to poke their legs with a staff. Once he lay down in a dark corner and fell asleep so soundly that he did not stir at the dismissal of the congregation. When he awoke, he thought he saw some strange appearance which so filled him with awe that in his terror he vowed that he would from that time forth lead a different life. But, alas, as so often happens, his goodness proved to be like the "morning cloud and the early dew".

Some years later, John, now a grown up youth, was present when hundreds assembled on Torr Mherachan to hear the famous Mr. Porteous. Many were savingly awakened on that memorable occasion and among them was the subject of our sketch. The genuineness of his conversion soon became apparent to all. His youthful levity was now gone for ever, and henceforth he continued to walk humbly in the fear of God. At a comparatively early age he was given a very high place by judicious Christians. From the remarks of some of his contemporaries, one could gather that he was a man of grave deportment, tender conscience, keen discernment, and one whose mind looked intently at things unseen.

After his marriage, he came to Lairg where he secured a small croft in Milinclarin. His house was on the rising ground which overlooks the dam near the mouth of Loch Shin—although at that time the dam was not in existence. For a time he acted as sexton, but he soon resigned, because the thought of having to open the graves of the godless was to him overpowering.

He was in the habit of attending many communions in Sutherland and Ross, and was a much esteemed speaker at the Fellowship Meetings. One of his striking sayings has come down to us (as given by the late Mr. George

MacDonald, Lairg). In referring to the grace of faith in the light of his own experience, he said, "Mur e so an creideamh, mise a bhi air mo thabhairt gu h-iomlan gus nach urrainn mi creidsinn, tha mise gun chreideamh gus an la an diugh." ("If this be no true faith that I brought entirely to that extremity that I cannot believe, then I am to this day destitute of faith.")

On one occasion, he was one of a party of worthies from Sutherland who were on their way to a Communion in Ross-shire. In those days, it was the custom among professors of religion when travelling to sacramental gatherings, to have some edifying subject upon which they might exchange views. On this particular day it was suggested that all present should state what it was that first induced them to join themselves to the Lord's people. The proposal was readily agreed to and as those who formed the company were well acquainted with one another, they used full liberty in detailing their experiences. At last all had spoken except one pious young lad whose modesty kept him silent. This youth, it seems, after his conversion, was at first under the impression that the Lord's people were perfect in this life and entirely free from inward corruption; and, as he had such an overpowering sense of the native wickedness of his own heart, he feared that he had little reason to think that he had any part with those who were now "new creatures" in Christ Jesus. But when eventually he heard those whose piety would admit of no doubt unburdening themselves of their complaints against the sin that dwelt still in them, he was drawn to them in a fellowship of spiritual sympathy.

An aged Christian present, having noticed the silence of this young disciple, turned to him and in a kind, fatherly way, desired him to be free in giving his experience since he was among friends. Being thus encouraged, the lad said, "Well, if I am to be candid, I must confess that it was not the grace they possessed but the indwelling sin they

bewailed that moved me to seek the society of the Lord's people." When John Mackintosh heard these words, he remarked, "All have now expressed their minds, and in recounting the Lord's dealings with their souls they have correctly described the experiences of true Christians, but no one has given us a surer mark of a work of grace than the last speaker."

Though John was sometimes in straitened circumstances, he was a large-hearted man who delighted to entertain as many as possible of the strangers who came to the parish to keep "the solemn holy days". On one occasion, when he had a number of guests at the Communion week, he discovered on Monday morning that his provisions were running low. Having risen very early, he went out to a birch wood which at that time grew near his house, and there he made known his wants at the Throne of Grace. He had not been long on his knees when he heard a thud in the glade beside him, and on rising to his feet, he saw near him a large salmon stretched on the sward—evidently dropped by an eagle, or more probably by an osprey, a bird which was not then extinct in that part of the country. The River Shin issues from the loch at a point about two or three hundred yards from where John's cottage stood. The weather being very dry at the time, the river was low, and apparently the salmon while struggling through the shallows on its way to the loch, had been seized by the bird. The prey, however, proved to be too heavy for the raider and he was forced to drop it near the spot where John Mackintosh was wrestling with the Lord. The good man at once secured the fish and so the breakfast was amply provided for. The late Rev. Alexander MacGillivray of Roseburn Free Church, Edinburgh, a son of the Lairg Minister at the time, used frequently to relate this incident, just as he had heard it as a boy from John Mackintosh himself in his father's manse.

It is not known when John Mackintosh began his cate-

chetical labours, but probably it was not till some years after the appointment of Angus Gunn, whose assistant he became and to whose generosity and brotherly consideration, the arrangement may probably be traced. Angus was the catechist recognized by the Royal Bounty Committee, but he had a strong desire that his revered friend should be associated with himself in the office, not so much to reduce his own burden as to share with him his small salary : and in this he was successful. To the assistant, therefore—who probably was the elder man—were assigned the districts of Gruids and Rheanbreck, while Angus confined himself to the other townships.

John took his duties very seriously. It is said that very shortly before entering upon his official work, he was studying Willison on the Shorter Catechism with great diligence. At his first diet of catechizing, however, he experienced so much of the unction that is from the Holy One that all that he had gathered from Willison vanished from his mind. That experience in Gruids taught him a valuable lesson, and ever after made him more dependent upon help from Above.

Some time before his death, he was heard to say that the stones of his house would yet be trampled under the feet of the wicked. Nothing at the time seemed more improbable, for the use of crushed stones as road metal was then unknown. Some years after his death, however, his cottage became vacant and soon fell into a dilapidated condition, and the pier at the Shin ferry—which in those days was much in use—being in need of extension, the stones of John's cottage, which was quite near, were utilized for this purpose. Thus the words of the good man proved to be true.

The exact date of his death cannot be ascertained.

JOHN MACDONALD, LAIRG

This lively Christian lived in Rhianbrock. He began to seek the way to Zion in early youth, and to the end of his earthly pilgrimage he continued to live in a way becoming the Gospel of Christ his Saviour.

For a short period, he served in the Sutherland Fencibles, and after his discharge he returned to his native district where he married. He was exceedingly gentle and of a very amiable disposition, while his tenderness of heart revealed itself in the depth of his concern for the careless and the ungodly. Assuredly he could say with the Psalmist, "I saw transgressors and was grieved." Heavenly-minded, he lived near unto God, and the sight of worthy John MacDonald in some nook by the highway with his broad blue bonnet in his hand, deep in the exercise of prayer was no infrequent one. At other times, on his way to some neighbouring Communion, he was wont to pour out his heart in song. His voice was pleasant and he delighted in using it in singing the Psalms of David or portions of the religious poems well known in the North, such as the spiritual songs of Donald Matheson, Kildonan, or of Dugald Buchanan.

In the year 1841, he was appointed catechist by the people who willingly undertook to pay his salary. Old and young flocked in such numbers to his meetings that accommodation became a problem. In the old Highland cottages of those days, whilst cattle and residents entered by the same door, the space reserved for the animals was divided off by a wattled partition. Such were the numbers of the worshippers that as a rule the cattle had to be turned outside that their stalls might be utilized to seat those who could not get into the house proper, and there they sat on pieces of bog pine or windlings of straw. Several reasons might be adduced to account for the un-

usually large attendances. At this time a wave of spiritual life was passing over many districts in the Highlands, which again was followed by the enthusiasm generated by the Disruption movement. Added to that, of course, was the catechist's own warm, spiritual manner in the conducting of the duties of his office.

On his death-bed, he was much harassed for a time by the Adversary. To his attached friend, Donald Munro, who had called to see him, he confided that he was afraid that he had not properly engaged in any religious duty. When the other heard these words, he was affected to tears, but restraining himself, he turned to his tried brother and said, "Tha an spiorad togarrach 'us an fheadil anmhunn, agus an nàmhaid làidir agus innleachdach, ach tha mi deimhin gum' b'ì thusa air do shaoradh cheart cho cinnteach ris an Abstol Phòl." ("The spirit is willing and the flesh weak, and the enemy is strong in his devices, but I am persuaded you shall be saved as surely as the Apostle Paul.") These words were as balm to the tempted saint and brought him relief. Shortly afterwards he was taken home at the age of 72 years.

He was succeeded by John Gunn of Elphin, a man of great ability and liberal education. He continued in office for a few years and was succeeded by Alexander MacIntosh from the parish of Dornoch. He is said to have been very searching and practical as a catechist. Donald Macleod from Assynt (Domhnall MacAonghais) followed, and he was the last catechist to labour in Lairg. He was called to his rest in 1873.

DONALD MUNRO, LAIRG

All who were in the eldership in the parish of Lairg at the Disruption became office-bearers in the Free Church. The oldest man in the Session was Donald Munro, Balnadelson, a native of Ardvar, Assynt.

Donald experienced the power of saving-grace at the early age of 16 years. He began his married life in Glencoul, and, after remaining there for a few years, he removed to Corrykinloch at the head of Loch Shin, where he was in the employment of Captain Donald Matheson of Shinness. Here his neighbours were few and far between, but he counted it his privilege that nearly all the house-holders who lived then in that sparsely-peopled district were sincere Christians.

At sheep-smearing, he and Paul MacInnes, Overscaig, and MacGregor, Allt-na-caorach, used to co-operate. Even should the smearing last for weeks, the conversation between the workers was always on a high plane. Seldom was any topic introduced save what was of a religious character. Oftentimes they exchanged views on passages of Scripture; at other times they referred to sermons which they had heard or quoted striking sayings of eminent men whom they had heard, while occasionally they would burst into snatches of Scriptural song.

Though Corry is far from any church, Donald was diligent in his attendance upon the means of grace. Lairg was over twenty miles away and three bridgeless rivers intervened, but he was very frequently among the worshippers there. After Mr. John Kennedy came to Assynt, he was a regular attendant upon the parish church of Inchnadamph, although in doing so, he had to pass over the shoulder of Ben More Assynt. Occasionally, Mr. Kennedy officiated at Torbreck, not far from Lochinver, which was fully twelve miles further away, but the additional distance did not prevent him from attending the service there, especially when the days were long. Few would be prepared to undertake such feats of pedestrianism, but he had an excellent constitution and was an unwearied walker, while the savoury teaching of his favourite minister so refreshed his spirit as to stimulate even his outward frame.

Once when returning on a Sabbath evening from a service in Assynt, he had a singular experience of the power and subtlety of Satan's devices. On coming to the brow of the hill overlooking his home, he turned aside as was his wont to give thanks for all that he had received that day. Just as he was on the point of kneeling on the brown bent, he observed, in a small field adjoining his house, a bull tossing sheaves in the air; and, to his great grief and surprise, he also noticed hard by his own boys engaged in some childish games while his wife stood unconcernedly watching them. His first impulse was to rush down to put a stop to it all, but he restrained himself and on reflection, he resolved not to omit his usual devotions. On his arrival at his home, he informed his wife of what he had witnessed from the hill. To his surprise, he was assured that the children had not been where he thought he had seen them; much less did they take part in any pastime. And as for the bull, he had not been near the cornfield for the stocks were all intact!

After spending nearly twenty years in Corrykinloch, he removed to Balnadelson near Lairg where he rented a somewhat large croft. Though he was now privileged in that he was within two miles of the church, yet he missed the solitude of the hills and he was wont to declare that he never got nearer his Maker than when far removed from the habitations of men.

He was a man who possessed sound judgment and a great measure of sanctified common-sense. Angus Gray, who was for some years his fellow-elder in the Lairg Free Church, used to say that there was another member who was his equal for piety, but that when matters came before the Session requiring judicious treatment, Donald was worth twelve of the type of the other elders. Though he was not a reader, for he was quite illiterate, he was a vigorous thinker and had a remarkably able mind. His frequent meditations and prayerful spirit gave a singular

freshness to his religious exercises. Of him it could be said as of the Psalmist that "he remembered the Lord upon his bed and in the night watches".

On one occasion, a stranger spent a night with him. Only a thin partition separated their beds. In the silence of the night, the visitor was greatly impressed by hearing the voice of his venerable host on the other side of the screen repeatedly give vent to the expression, uttered in a low chant, "Glòir do'n Athair ann a bhi cur a Mhic; is glòir do' n a'Mhac a thàinig." ("Glory to the Father for sending His son; and glory to the Son Who came.")

His retentive memory enabled him to quote passages of Scripture with great accuracy. As a Friday speaker, he was very popular, for he was original and never tedious. Once at a Fellowship Meeting at Creich, when called to speak, he described the experiences of the Lord's people in a few pregnant sentences and then sat down. When he had finished, Mr. Kennedy, Killearnan, who presided, turned to him and said, "I wish, Donald, you would rise again and give us more of the good things you have been telling us."

Strongly built and somewhat under ordinary height, Donald, with his long curly locks—which retained much of their golden lustre even in old age—made a picturesque figure sitting in his place in the House of God. He was much missed in Lairg when he passed to his rest on the 14th April, 1852, at the advanced age of 90 years.

JOHN SUTHERLAND, LAIRG

A leading member of the Lairg Session was John Sutherland, the worthy parochial schoolmaster. He was a native of Farlary, on the borders of the parishes of Rogart and Golspie, and was the son of Hugh Sutherland, a pious man, who rented a fair-sized croft in that district.

Hugh's grave, marked by a stone, with an epitaph drawn by his dutiful son, can be seen in Cladh Mherran, Sciberscross, where his forebears for generations were buried.

Though the exact date of John Sutherland's appointment is not known, he was schoolmaster in 1813. He was a most competent teacher, and gave great attention to training his pupils to translate the English Bible into Gaelic, since in those days it was exceedingly difficult to procure a copy of the whole Bible in Scottish Gaelic. Some of his scholars who were very lame in conversational English could thus translate whole chapters into Gaelic with wonderful accuracy.

He was a strict disciplinarian, yet he was highly respected by his pupils. Some, in after life, testified to the place he occupied in their esteem, by naming one of their children after him. John Sutherland's influence for good, however, was not confined to the schoolroom, for his authority was felt throughout the whole community. Evil doers were quite as much afraid of meeting him as they were of meeting the minister. He had a good knowledge of sacred music and ably led the praise in public worship.

At the Disruption, Mr. Sutherland was under the necessity of leaving the parish in which he had taught so long and to which he was so deeply attached. At that time the Free Church ministers were calling for pious men to prepare for the ministry. To this call, John Sutherland felt it his duty to respond, for though not young, he had received an excellent classical education. Accordingly he proceeded to the Free Church College in Edinburgh, and, after completing his studies there, he was licensed; and soon thereafter he was sent out to Australia to help the Free Church cause there. He was settled over a congregation which had many ties with Scotland and there he laboured until his death.

JAMES MACKAY, LAIRG

James Mackay was the last of the elders ordained before the seventies of last century.

When comparatively young, he began to follow the means of grace. He happened to be working in Caithness at road-making when Rev. Walter R. Taylor first came to preach in Thurso. In those days a prayer-meeting used to be held on Saturdays at noon in a room in the hotel of pious Mrs. Wm. Mackay. After Mr. Taylor had alighted from the coach, the hostess took him to the apartment where the good people were assembled to introduce him to the company, among whom was James Mackay. After the minister had retired, someone asked the famous David Steven what was his opinion of the young preacher. "No matter what I think of him," said he, "he is the minister of Thurso, for as he entered the room, the passage came very forcibly before my mind, 'Arise and anoint him for this is he'."

For about a year before his death, James did not move much from his home in Saval, but one fine Sabbath morning in September, he signified his intention of going to the house of God. The people were greatly surprised to see James present in his old place from which he had been so long absent. The English sermon on that day was preached by Dr. Taylor who happened to be spending a few weeks in the neighbourhood of Lairg. After the now venerable preacher had come down from the pulpit, James informed him that he had heard him preach his first sermon in Thurso about sixty years before; and then recalled the incident in Thurso Hotel. This was the last sermon that James ever heard, for though he was spared for some time, he never again was able to move from home. He died in 1891 in his ninety-fourth year.

Donald, brother of James Mackay, who was the youngest of the Disruption elders, was a shepherd in

Arskaig, about eight miles from the church and without a road. Despite this fact, he was seldom absent from church where he precented for years. His free and bright manner made him very popular with the young.

**DONALD MACDONALD AND GEORGE MACDONALD,
LAIRG**

Donald MacDonald, merchant, Lairg, was a nephew of John MacDonald, the catechist. Having prospered in business he was a very substantial supporter of the Free Church cause from the Disruption onwards.

For many years he was an elder, and, having a rich and powerful voice, he also acted as precentor. He was very fond of the "Long" Gaelic Psalm tunes. Indeed he seldom had any other unless occasionally at the prayer-meeting he took one of the ordinary melodies. His wife, Mary MacDonald, was a daughter of George MacDonald, elder, Torroboll, whose wife was a daughter of Mary Graham already referred to. She abounded in works of charity, and the poor found in her a truly helpful friend, while to the household of faith her kindness was indeed bountiful.

On one occasion, she had the privilege of entertaining Dr. MacDonald, Ferintosh, and Dr. Thomas Guthrie, Edinburgh, when they were visiting Free Church congregations shortly after the Disruption.

Donald MacDonald passed away in August 1884. His wife survived him for about twenty years. They had two sons who walked in the footsteps of their worthy parents. James, the younger, very gentle in manner and somewhat reserved, was a sincere Christian. His early death in 1885 at the age of thirty-three years was greatly lamented.

His brother George was one who feared the Lord from his boyhood. For over forty years he was an elder in the

Free Church of Lairg. As a lay-preacher he was very acceptable, being equally fluent in Gaelic and English.

On one occasion, he was sent to supply at Rogart during the absence of the Minister, and stayed at the manse. After he had retired to bed he was lying awake in the bright summer night, when he heard a low voice. Listening attentively, he distinctly heard the words, "Cathair Breitheanais" (the Judgment Seat). The words were repeated quickly for several minutes and then ceased. His own interpretation was that they were a solemn admonition from the Most High to be faithful in speaking the truth to his fellow-sinners. He had a facile pen and wrote very interesting sketches of the "Men" of Sutherlandshire. His son, Donald, became a Minister in the Free Church.

He passed to his everlasting rest at the age of 83 years.

NEIL MACKENZIE, LAIRG

This estimable man was a native of Shinness. After the eviction of the crofters in that part of the parish, he removed to Milinclarin, which is now represented by the village of Lairg.

His watchfulness and tender walk secured for him universal respect, while his kindly nature attracted the young to him. The small plot of land which he rented was insufficient to provide winter provender for his cow, and such was the attachment of the children to him that boys considered it a great pleasure to be permitted to take with them on their way to school a sheaf of corn for Neil's cow.

His humility was very marked. Once while still in Shinness, he and a pious neighbour, Thomas Ross, who then lived at Coloboll, were working together at peat-cutting. At mid-day, they sat down on a heathery knoll to

rest, when up started a grouse from its nest hard by. Neil, observing the bird's sudden flight, remarked, "No wonder, Thomas, although the poor hird should fly away for we bear with us so much of the ill-savour of the leprosy of sin."

This Thomas Ross afterwards had a small croft at Gruids, where he died at an advanced age.

At the Fellowship Meetings, Neil was weighty and edifying, but it was when leading in devotional exercises that he excelled. Donald Munro, Balnadelson, than whom there was none more judicious, was wont to remark that he put Neil Mackenzie in exercise at a prayer-meeting before everyone else he had ever heard.

He was a diligent attender upon the Communion services in the surrounding parishes and also in Ross-shire and thus found entrance to the affections and esteem of the Lord's witnesses over a wide area. He died not later than the fourth decade of the last century, but the exact date of his death cannot now be ascertained.

JANE MACKAY, LAIRG

Neil Mackenzie had a sister who was a woman of high-toned piety. She was married to a Kenneth Mackay. They had a daughter, Jane, who was always referred to locally as, "Sìne Choinnich". ("Jane daughter of Kenneth"). This young woman early made the good choice, and in the ardour of her first love, she frequently travelled a-foot even as far as Ross-shire that she might have the privilege of gathering with the Lord's people on sacramental occasions. Such was her zest for the things of God that she was heard to say that in those days, she scarcely felt the earth under her feet, no matter how long the way might be. She had frequent opportunities of hearing Mr. Kennedy, Killearnan, and loved to quote his weighty say-

ings. She was very Heavenly-minded, and much given to meditation and prayer. Though in humble circumstances, there probably was not another professing woman attending the Lairg Free Church to whom a higher place was accorded by the people. She was about the last person in the parish who made use of the blue-hooded cloak, at one time generally worn by elderly women in the North. When she passed along the road thus attired, children often gazed after her with awe as though they were beholding one of the Old Testament prophetesses; and yet there was nothing stern in her aspect, for she was exceedingly gentle and kindly disposed.

From mid age, her home was a cottage on Corrish Hill in Gruids. In her house, one of the Saturday noon private prayer-meetings, so prominent in the former religious life of the Highlands, was held as long as she lived. Indeed it was the last such in the parish. She was called to her rest in the early spring of 1881 at the age of more than four-score years.

GEORGE MACDONALD, LAIRG

One of Neil Mackenzie's contemporaries was George MacDonald, Torroboll, a neighbour of John MacKay to whom reference has been already made. They lived in the same township and both were members of the Kirk Session. Though George was not so widely known as some of his fellow-elders, he was a man of true piety and sound judgment. In his boyhood he had better opportunities of attending school than many of the youth of his day, and the education which he thus received was helpful to him in connection with his duties as an elder.

He used to tell the following story as to a somewhat startling experience which his father had at the time of the Jacobite Rising of 1745. News had come that some of

Lord Cromartie's men had invaded Sutherland, and the family had departed for safety to the hill, driving their cattle before them. In the midst of the bustle and confusion, the little fellow was forgotten. When the marauders entered the house some time later with their weapons in their hands, he thought that his end had come, and turning to them with an imploring look, he cried out, "O leigibh leam mi-fhéin a gharadh mus marbh sibh mi". ("Oh, let me warm myself before you kill me.") Needless to say, no one laid a hand upon him, for the unwelcome visitors had come simply to procure much needed provisions.

George died on the 24th October, 1840, in his seventy-ninth year.

GEORGE MACLEOD, LAIRG

George MacLeod was a native of the parish of Creich. Though his life was ever what the world would call respectable, he was not regarded as serious-minded in his early years. As a youth, he was fond of playing the bagpipes and of showing off his Highland dress. Thus attired on one occasion, he walked with others to Rogart on a Communion Sabbath morning. Before reaching the spot where the open air services were held, they rested for a time by the wayside. Just then, James Matheson, Clais nan Cnamh, happened to come along, and, shrewdly suspecting that George was more anxious to be seen than to hear, he stood and most solemnly repeated the words of the prophet, "Behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." These words made a lasting impression upon young George, and from that time forth he gave up his vain ways.

After serving his apprenticeship as a blacksmith in Clyne, he came to Bridgend, Lairg, where he founded a successful business. There he—another Gaius—with his like-minded partner kept an open door to the Lord's people. Though not so widely known as a Friday speaker as some of the men of his county, yet he was greatly loved for his beautiful Christian life, and he occupied no ordinary place in the affections of the Lord's people. To see him at worship in public or in the family was an inspiration, for there rested on his countenance a sweet gravity which showed how his mind was influenced by eternal things. He had a pleasant voice and was an excellent precentor. To Dr. Aird, he was much attached and frequently walked to Creich to hear him. It must have been to him one of the greatest trials of his life when on considering it his duty to throw in his lot with the Free Presbyterian Church, he had to part ecclesiastically with one to whom he was so much indebted.

His health began to fail for more than a year before his demise. In his last illness, he did not escape the assaults of unbelief, but deliverance came and his end was peace. He was called to his rest at the age of 72 years.

ANGUS GRAY, LAIRG

Angus Gray was born in the parish of Creich, but in his early boyhood the family removed to Culmailie where he was able to attend the parish school, which at that time was taught by the worthy Mr. John Sutherland. Being a bright scholar, he made the most of his opportunities and received a good education. At an early age he became interested in religious matters and was encouraged to make an open profession by becoming a communicant. A few years after the Disruption, he was admitted to the Free Church Session and was then probably one of the youngest

men in the eldership in the county. The duties connected with his sacred office he carefully carried out, and, according to his light, he was quite sincere in his religious activities ; but, as he afterwards used to confess, he was nothing but a professor with a name to live while in reality he was dead. But he was to receive a rude awakening.

On the Thursday of Rosehall Communion, under the preaching of the Rev. George Kennedy, Dornoch, who had been a schoolfellow of his own, Angus came to realize that he had been professing godliness while ignorant of its power. In referring to that occasion, he once said to the writer, "When Mr. Kennedy and I were boys at school, I accidentally in play hit his face with my shoe and knocked out one of his teeth ; but in Rosehall he dealt me such a blow that he drove all my teeth down my throat." Angus came away from that service in great mental distress. He afterwards said, "Prior to that day I could pray as well as I have ever done since, as far as the outward form was concerned, but all was now swept from me. When I attempted to pray I could not find suitable words and I felt that everything was gone." Atheistic thoughts rushed in upon him like a flood, and for a time he could neither read nor pray. So great was his distress that he resigned the eldership. He continued in great stress of soul for some time, but the hour of his deliverance at last came when the passage, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His son to be the propitiation for our sins" was applied to his weary soul with extraordinary power and sweetness.

To strangers he might appear to be very stern and unapproachable, yet he was a kind-hearted and affectionate friend. To young professing people whom he believed to be sincere, he was most fatherly and sympathetic. His religion was thoroughly practical ; as the poor of the parish well knew, for few helped them as he did. During his long life, many clouds passed over him, and he was frequently

harassed by the temptations of Satan and weighed down under a deep sense of the sinfulness of sin. But with him the promise was realized, "at evening time it shall be light", for towards the close of his life, he was privileged to walk in the light of God's countenance and to rejoice in His name. The words used by the Lord in first drawing him to Himself now became the means of bringing sweet consolation to his soul.

He joined the Free Presbyterian Church and accepted office as an elder. His son, Alexander, a worthy man, also became an elder in that church. His youngest son, John, a sincere and humble Christian, remained in the Free Church.

Angus Gray passed to his everlasting rest on 24th February, 1903.

MRS. MACKAY, MUDALE

Bean Mhòdail—or "The godly woman of Mudale", was a Mrs. Mackay to name, but she was locally known as Margaidh Bhàn. She was once hearing Rev. Thomas Mackay, Lairg, when she was storm-stayed for three weeks. She lived during that time in the old Lairg Manse. Isabel Ross, Mr. Thomas's godly housekeeper—a native of Kilmuir Easter—and Margaidh used to spend part of each night, speaking on their favourite theme—the love of Christ.

Although her home in Mudale was practically twenty miles from Lairg church, and with no way of getting there except by walking over hills and moors and crossing bridgeless streams—for there were no roads in those days—she attended the ministry of her favourite preacher, Mr. Mackay, for years, even when she was somewhat advanced in life. It would appear to be a formidable task for a woman to walk the double journey, even in summer, when

the moors were comparatively dry and the streams easily crossed. But so highly did she regard the privilege of sitting under the edifying teaching of Mr. Mackay, that she might often be seen in Lairg church in the winter season.

There is a tradition that one year when the snow lay heavily for months on some of the high ground over which she had to pass, she crossed one particular snow wreath on fourteen successive Sabbaths.

It is said that once, in summer, her favourite Minister happened to be away from home—whether at the General Assembly or assisting at a Communion, tradition is silent. This good woman seemingly did not know that Mr. Mackay was away, and so on Saturday she made her usual preparation for setting out in due time early on Sabbath morning for Lairg. Before sunrise or very early on Sabbath, she heard a strange voice calling out at the door, "Are you awake?" "Oh yes, I am awake, what do you want?" The stranger stated that he would be obliged if he could be properly directed on his way to Lairg as he wished to be there in time for the service. "Wait," said the voice within, "until I get ready, and I shall accompany you, for I intend to go there myself." When she had opened the door, she saw a young man wrapped in a cloak which hid his clerical attire, for he was the Royal Bounty Missionary at Achness, who had newly come to the district, and had left on Saturday to supply Lairg pulpit. Possibly mist had fallen, but in any case, he had lost his way and did not know how to proceed. She took in the traveller, and invited him to join her at breakfast, after which she conducted family worship herself, as she did not know who the stranger was. Shortly after leaving the house, he asked her to inform him the way he should take, as he was anxious to reach Lairg in time and wished to hurry on, while she could proceed at her leisure. She remarked that she did not think she would hinder him and ere long, he

discovered that it was sorely taxing his strength to keep pace with his guide. Before reaching the end of the journey, she handed to her companion a dry pair of stockings which she carried along with another pair which she had for her own use.

When they came to the church, instead of entering it—for they arrived before many of the congregation had assembled—the stranger managed to slip away and made his way to the Manse, which was a little further on. When the hour for public worship had come she was surprised to see her young fellow traveller enter the pulpit. On rare occasions, she might be a little late in reaching Lairg church, and would slip quietly in, but such was the effect of her presence that Mr. Thomas had been heard to say that though she might enter the church unobserved while he was engaged in prayer or in any other part of the service he would forthwith be conscious of her presence.

CHAPTER VI

PARISH OF CREICH

ALEXANDER GRANT, CREICH, CATECHIST

ALEXANDER Grant was born in the parish of Golspie. In 1798 he enlisted in the Sutherland Fencibles and served in his regiment during the troubles which culminated in the Irish Rebellion. Shortly thereafter, the regiment was disbanded and Alexander joined the 93rd Highlanders. After his period of military service was completed, he obtained employment in Strathaven as a tailor. Removing to Glasgow, he married Christian Gunn from Kildonan. Some years later he left the city and proceeded to Latheron, Caithness. His stay there was not long. He had a croft at Clynelish and there he built for himself a house. Unfortunately for him, the farmer who occupied Clynelish viewed Alexander's croft with a covetous eye, and so manipulated matters as to obtain his eviction. When passing through Brora with the cart containing his household effects, Alexander met the very man who had been the cause of all his troubles. To him he very solemnly said, "When you leave Clynelish, you will not possess as much as you see in my cart, and that will be at no distant date." His prediction was fulfilled to the letter a few years afterwards.

Alexander removed to Creich where he got a place at the end of Loch Migdale and there he gave much useful service as the parish catechist. He had opportunities to serve elsewhere, as catechist, but he considered that he had a call from the Lord to labour in Creich and he never left it.

In his old age when debarred by infirmity from attendance upon the Communion services in the neighbouring parishes, upon the Friday of the Communion in Rogart when his wife was engaged in tidying his room, he suddenly said to her, "Cease for a little, for I think I hear Havie Munro giving out the question at Rogart." He quoted the passage, and, strange as it may appear, it was afterwards ascertained from some who were present that the verse quoted by the old saint was the very one which formed the basis of the question given out that day at Rogart.

Alexander passed to his rest in October, 1861, aged 91 years.

GUSTAVUS MUNRO, CREICH

Gustavus Munro, who was better known as Havie Munro, lived after his marriage at Spinningdale where he worked at his trade as a shoemaker. His wife was a very pious woman of the name of Margaret Ross.

The intrusion of the Rev. Murdo Cameron into the parish of Creich caused great heart-burnings among those who loved the Cause of the Lord. One day Hugh MacKenzie, who also lived in Spinningdale, on his way to the monthly prayer-meeting, noticed Havie working at the side of the road. At the same time, Havie noticed him. "Where are you going?" he cried. "I am on my way to the meeting," said Hugh, "and I am surprised that you are not going also." "Oh," replied Havie, "you will give a blow to the cause by countenancing the intruded minister." Hugh was silent for a moment, and then simply said that he would call on his way back. Havie then went to pray. When Hugh returned, he called on his friend. "Havie," he said, "I am not to ask you to go there any more."

It was then resolved that they and those who were like-minded would meet for worship on Sabbaths at Migdale



Migdale Loch, taken from spot where Free Church Communion were held till 1924. In background is Migdale Rock, in the vicinity of which services were conducted by laymen prior to 1843.

Rock in summer, and in a barn in the east end of the parish during the winter months. This arrangement was carried out for thirty years, until in 1843 the Rev. Gustavus Aird was inducted as first minister of Creich Free Church.

During the ministry of Dr. Angus MacIntosh in Tain, Havie used frequently to cross the Meikle Ferry to hear one who had a particularly high place in his regard.

Later in life Havie removed to Craigton of Astle. There on his death-bed he remarked to a very worthy man who was calling on him, that he sometimes got so much of the Divine Presence that he prayed, "Cum air ais do làmh." ("Stay thine hand.") His widow said afterwards he stated that he had made a mistake, that he should have prayed for more and more strength to "take in" what was given him of the Divine Presence. He finished his course on 9th February, 1866, in his ninetieth year.

RODERICK MACRAE, CREICH—CATECHIST

Roderick Macrae—"Ruairidh na h-urnuigh"—was a contemporary of Hugh Ross, Kilmuir. Although catechist of Creich, he was a man who feared that in his spiritual experienced he had not enough law work. There is a tradition current to the effect that once when at a Communion at Tain, he entered a clump of trees to find a quiet spot for his private devotions. There he began to bewail the unbroken nature of his heart, and, seizing two stones, he began to beat them together and to cry that his heart was as hard and unbreakable as they were. He pleaded that he might pass through deep conviction of sin lest that in the end he prove to be a hypocrite. Hugh Ross, who had also gone for the same purpose to a corner near him, overheard his bemoanings and petitions, and at once fell upon his knees and most earnestly sought that his friend's prayer might not be answered, for, said he, "If his prayer be answered he will go to splinters."

ALEXANDER CHISHOLM, CREICH

Alexander Chisholm lived in Ruigh Mór on a croft which is now included in the farm of Flod. He was an eminently godly man and a contemporary of Hugh Mackenzie. Alexander's wife was like-minded with himself, and they were blessed with a daughter, Ann, who was also a spiritually minded Christian. She married Hugh Murray who lived at Torr Roy.

What Alexander was in the community may be gathered from the following incident. When Gustavus Munro was under concern, he was wont to attend the monthly meetings at Creich church, which then were open only for communicant members, or those impressed. One day, he saw Hugh Mackenzie before him so he slackened his pace lest he should overtake him—for such holy men at that time filled him with awe. Chancing to look back, he saw Alexander Chisholm coming after. "Oh" said he afterwards, "I felt all the way as between two fires from Heaven."

Alexander was aboard the unfortunate boat which foundered in the Meikle Ferry when Sheriff MacCulloch was drowned. He escaped with his life, but, he said, a still more dreadful thing would happen to Creich. His prediction was fulfilled in the intrusion of the "Moderate" minister already referred to.

CHAPTER VII

HELMSDALE AND LOTH

COLIN SUTHERLAND, HELMSDALE

COLIN Sutherland was a native of the parish of Loth and lived for some time at Kintradwell, until he was removed at the time of the evictions, when he went to Garty. He was married three times. His first wife, Elspeth Fraser, was eminently pious. Prior to their marriage, she said to Colin, "I believe we are meant for each other, but we shall be only five years together." Her presentiment proved to be true. He was survived by his third wife, Janet Melville.

Colin was one who lived near to his God, and was privileged to have much of the secret of the Lord as the following incidents fully prove. His grandchild, a young girl, had taken seriously ill, and eventually had fallen into a comatose state, and to all appearance was dead. Indeed, so convinced were some of those present that she was dead, that they talked of dressing the seemingly lifeless body. The mother objected, and said she would not allow this until she had sent a messenger to her father. When the grandfather entered the room, he said, "The child is not dead but sleepeth", for that Scripture seemed to come very forcibly before his mind. He suggested that word should be sent without delay to the minister of Clyne, Dr. Mackenzie, who was a fully qualified and successful physician. Dr. Mackenzie soon appeared, and the means he applied were successful. The girl made a complete recovery, and lived to become the mother of eight of a family.

One evening, as Colin sat by the fire in his home, he suddenly became agitated, and mentioning the name of his daughter Jane—a Mrs. Gordon—he prayed aloud for her. His wife who was present, asked what he meant. “I am thinking of poor Jane and her sore bereavement.” “What has happened?”, his wife enquired. “Poor Jane has lost her son: John Gordon has been taken away.” This promising lad was suddenly cut off in Glasgow, and a letter conveying the sad news was received a few days afterwards.

Early one Sabbath morning, Colin arose, and hurriedly dressing himself, said, as he grasped his staff, “I am going out to see Widow George Bannerman”—referring to a godly woman who lived in the district—“but let me hurry as I may be too late. I believe her soul shall be in glory ere I reach.” When he entered, he found that some of the neighbours were dressing the body of the pious widow.

Once during a fall of snow, he went to visit a married daughter who lived in Dalchalm, in the parish of Clyne. Night came on ere he reached the end of the journey, and in the blinding drift, he lost his way. After crossing a burn which flowed near his daughter’s cottage, he became quite exhausted. His friends, who had no idea that he was coming, were comfortably seated before a blazing fire when a collie-dog began to bark loudly. The dog was called to stop, but it continued to show signs of restlessness. At last one of the company opened the door, and no sooner was this done than the dog rushed out. The people followed, and were led by the dog’s barking to the good man who was floundering about in the storm, and getting benumbed. He told his experience to his friends who were overjoyed to hear how he had been so providentially rescued, and asked them to be kind to the sagacious animal that was the means of saving his life.

On one occasion during the fishing time in Helmsdale, a report had come that there was an exceptionally good fishing out in the Moray Firth, which induced many of

the fishermen to venture thither. A neighbour of Colin's, Alex. Mackay, was preparing to set out, when Colin appeared and advised him not to go with the other boats, but to turn northwards along the Caithness coast. Though Alex. was much inclined to go along with the other boats, on Colins' advice he turned northwards. When all the boats had returned, it was found that no one had a better catch than Alex. Mackay.

Shortly after the decease of his second wife, he happened to be in a house in Rogart in which a breach had just been made by death. Many of the neighbours had come in and the house was full. The good man, in conducting worship, took the opportunity of impressing on the hearers the uncertainty of life, and said, "Death has come very near to me since I have last been here, but take care: there is one here to whom death will come nearer still, and that very shortly." A young girl, apparently in normal health, was present, who at once felt that she was the person to whom reference was made. She expressed her conviction to her companions, and relatives, but they did not take the matter seriously. Not many days after, the young woman became ill and in a short time passed away.

On one occasion, he held a meeting in Torr-Soilleir, in Strath Brora, when the writer's grandmother, the wife of Donald Grant, Uarachdcoille, then a very young married woman, came with a baby in her arms. She did not wish to enter the house lest the child should disturb the meeting. The building was primitive. For a window, there was a hole in the wall, into which at night, or when there was a storm, a bunch of straw was thrust. Colin who presided, said, "There is a little bird outside which is picking up every word that is said." Though she was within earshot, she could not be seen from inside the building.

When in Loth one night, that passage of Scripture, "The King's daughter is all glorious within", came very

powerfully before his mind. He rose and came to Kintradwell to the house of a very pious woman, thinking it was she that was called home. When he reached her house, he found that the good woman was in her usual health, but she told him to go to Brora and call at the house of a Mrs. Gunn and that he would have the fulfilment of the passage there. When he reached, he found that this good woman had just passed away.

Colin was a lively Christian. He was not only animated, but weighty in religious exercises, while his nearness to the Lord gave a freshness to his thoughts and an impressiveness to his manner. When he attended Communion, it was very remarkable how little sleep sufficed him. He would continue five days at sacramental services with little more than an hour's rest each night, and yet feel no inconvenience at worship during the day, "for the joy of the Lord was his strength".

When Colin was past middle age, a pious lad was in the habit of coming to Dornoch Communion. This young man was physically very strong and active, and had the enthusiasm of one that had newly tasted that the Lord is gracious. In his zeal, he sometimes got up at sunrise to engage in private devotion, but however early he was afoot, he almost invariably found that Colin was out before him, holding fellowship with his Maker.

Colin possessed considerable mental vigour, and could express his thoughts very forcibly and readily. Here are some of his pithy sayings. Once at a Communion at Lairg in the historic Clais-nam-buaille in pre-Disruption days, he was resting on the green as the people were assembling. Near the tent were several forms, which were only partly occupied, and some friend asked him to have a seat on one of them. "No, no," was the ready reply, "I have been too long resting on a *form*"—meaning, of course, a religion of mere form. He was another time at a Fellowship meeting at Kincardine, when a passage in Matt. 5 was given

out for discussion. When Colin was called to speak, he began by saying—"My friends, these words were not at first read from a piece of yellow paper, but came from the warm heart of the Saviour."

He was deeply attached to the minister in whose church he worshipped for about a dozen years before his death—the Boanerges of the North—Mr. John MacDonald, Helmsdale. Mr. MacDonald had the greatest respect for Colin. The latter was also a great favourite of his minister's namesake and distant relative, Dr. MacDonald, Ferintosh. Dr. MacDonald was once on his way to Caithness, and called at Helmsdale. The people were very desirous that he should stay and preach on the following day, but he wished to continue his journey. However, during the night, a severe snowstorm came on which rendered the roads impassable for a week. Dr. MacDonald was thus compelled to remain and he preached every evening. After the close of his last service, Colin said to him—"Well, minister, your Master was kinder to us than you, for you were not at first to give us one meal, but you had to remain all this time to give us a daily feast."

Shortly before his death, he called on his Christian friends in the district, for he had the expectation of being near the end of his earthly pilgrimage. A few days afterwards, he was called away. He died in 1850 at a very advanced age. He was ordained to the eldership prior to the Disruption and was a member of the Kirk-Session of Helmsdale Free Church from 1843 to his death. He was one of seven brothers, all of whom had found the Lord. His brother Alexander, was decidedly pious. Another—William to name—was a bright Christian. He was an elder in the congregation at Helmsdale. He possessed a sweet voice and was a beautiful Gaelic precentor. He was latterly blind, but his memory was so retentive that after losing his eyesight, he often led the praise in public, and chanted the line quite as correctly as if he could see to read.

A daughter of Colin was married to John Sutherland, Clyne. Some time after the death of her husband, she went to live with a married daughter in Saval, Lairg, and after the decease of the latter, she returned to Clyne, where she died at a very advanced age. She was singularly guileless and lived a most watchful and consistent Christian life. A grandson of hers, William Sutherland—a son of the daughter in Saval, a young man of much promise, was cut off when in the third year of his Arts course in the University. Young William Sutherland's handsome figure was well known for some years prior to his death at the great Communion gatherings in Sutherland, where he led the praise of the congregations in the open air. He was an able exponent of the Long Gaelic Psalm tunes and did much to revive their use in public worship. His removal at the early age of 25 years on the 7th March, 1892, was much lamented throughout the whole of Sutherland.

ADAM MACKAY, HELMSDALE

Adam Mackay, better known as "Adam Phail", lived in the Helmsdale district. Though he often suffered from mental aberrations, he was a decidedly pious man. He was much given to prayer, and when his periodic fits would pass away for a time, his company was much enjoyed by discerning people. He would express his thoughts tersely and strikingly in his native Gaelic.

On one occasion, he went along with Gordon Ross and Colin Sutherland to a certain house to conduct worship. Gordon took the lead, and after worship was over, the three men began to discuss some ecclesiastical question. They got so animated that they had to part without coming to agreement. Adam went to a nearby peat stack to pray, and Colin retired to the barn, while Gordon paced up and down the road. Apparently, Adam heard part of Colin's

prayer in the barn, and so affected was he that, on the spur of the moment, he composed a verse in Gaelic, which he repeated loud enough to be heard by Gordon.

After some little time, the men returned to the house, when Colin said, "Chuir Satan a mach sinn, ach thug gràs a steach sinn." "Satan has put us out, but grace has brought us in." He then asked Gordon to take the Bible and read. "No," said Gordon, "I shall not do so until I first give you a verse of a song which I have just heard." He then, at his own expense, repeated the stanza which he had picked up from Adam—

"A Chailein, is tù bha òrdail,
"Is tù bha dòigheil, grinn,
"Is tù bu docha leam na Gordon
"Ged is ann aig as mò dh' eòlas cinn."

"Colin thy words were in order,
"Thy speech well chosen and fine,
"I like thee better than Gordon,
"Though his learning is greater than thine."

Worship was again engaged in, and such was the liberty they enjoyed in the exercise and in conversing on the things of the Kingdom of God, that the sun had risen ere they departed to their respective homes.

JOHN MACKAY, LOTH

John Mackay, "Ian Phail", was the last catechist of Loth. He lived near Collie-burn, on the slope above the road which now leads to Helmsdale. He was distantly related to the well-known Adam Phail. He was a gentle, guileless and lovable man, and a consistent, lively Christian. His own worthy minister, Mr. MacDonald, Helmsdale,

referring in his diary to his venerable catechist, writes of him as "frail, but flourishing, 'an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile'."

John's singular meekness, however, did not prevent him from administering a rebuke when he felt that he could not conscientiously be silent. He was once present at a diet of catechizing which was presided over by a minister whose orthodoxy was not above suspicion. In the course of examination, the minister put a question, bearing on the priestly office of Christ, to a man who was not regarded as discerning, and received an answer with which he signified agreement. The catechist, however, was far from satisfied with the answer, as it seemed to limit the work of the Great High Priest within the veil: and he shewed signs of dissent. This attracted the minister's attention, and turning to John, he asked him why he appeared to be so dissatisfied. The reply was not flattering. "I have been hearing a blind minister asking a question of a blind man and the minister approving of the blind man's answer." "But was not the man's statement correct?" asked the minister. "Oh, no", the catechist replied, "for do we not read that 'He is a High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec'." After a pause, the minister said, "Oh, John, I'm not sure but you are right, and I must hurry home that I may enter your view into my notebook for it may be useful to me yet."

John died at a very advanced age, shortly after the Disruption.

CHAPTER VIII

STRATHS OF KILDONAN AND HALLADALE

JOHN GRANT, KILDONAN

JOHN Grant, who was almost invariably referred to by the Gaelic speaking people of the North, as Ian Grand Mór (the great John Grant) on account of his eminence as a Christian, was born in the parish of Kildonan in the year 1752, and lived for the greater part of his life in the township of Diobale in that district. Though in his youth he had the privilege of hearing sound, evangelical ministers in his native parish, yet it seems that he received his first saving impressions at the meetings of the "Men" of whom not a few then resided in that Strath. Once on his way home from a prayer-meeting which was held by some local worthies, the passage, "Walk before God in the light of the living" flashed with such power across his mind that he was overwhelmed with a sense of his sin. For seven long years he continued under deep conviction of sin. At length, however, the day of his deliverance began to dawn. One night, he rose out of bed, and as he was leaving the house, he requested his wife not to follow him. He moved on in the direction of the river Illidh, which was then in spate, and entering the stream, he was carried away by the current, which carried him to the opposite bank. As John stood on the margin of the river, after having emerged from its turbid waters, he realized that in more than one sense, he was treading on safe ground, for the Lord had caused the light of His Salvation to shine on him and set his feet on the rock. That eventful time was for John

“a night to be much observed unto the Lord,” for in it he could, for the first time, from experience join in that song of praise—“He took me from a fearful pit and from the miry clay.”

The deep distress of soul through which John had passed may have accounted for his hesitation, in receiving with open arms, those whose conviction was not as deep as his own. But, if he was inclined to keep some, of whose sincerity he was doubtful, on probation for a considerable period, yet when the case of any individual was borne forcibly on his spirit at the throne of grace, he ever proved to be to such a fast and faithful friend.

When strangers called to see him, it was his habit to retire to his barn, and if, before the mercy seat, he found his soul knit to theirs through the powerful application of God's Word, he never ceased to take a prayerful interest in them. It was a rule of his to convoy any that he thus “found” in the barn, and to stand after bidding them farewell, till they had gone out of sight. He took a mental note of what finally shut them from his view—whether wood, or rock, or hill, and he has been heard to remark that he could never look at that object again without thinking of his friends of the barn.

Though to a stranger he might seem at times to be stern and unsympathetic, he had a warm and loving heart: and those that found a place in it were devotedly attached to him. He was signally owned of God in being instrumental in the conversion of souls, and very especially in dealing with tried and tempted persons.

John was once at a Communion in Strath Dearn, probably in the time of the godly Mr. Hugh Mackay. It was then customary to hold the services in the open air, on Thursday and Friday, near Tomatin, not far from where the railway viaduct now spans the Findhorn. The congregation met from Saturday till Monday near the Church at Moy. Among the people who had assembled under the

shade of the trees at Tomatin, was William MacIntosh, a young man from Dores. As there was such a large concourse, it had occurred to him that he would be able to see and hear better if he climbed one of the trees beside which the people were seated. He quickly took his place in the fork of a large birch tree. When John Grant was called to speak, he noticed the occupant of the elevated seat, and pointing his finger towards him, he exclaimed, "Zacchaeus come down." The man who probably was drowsy after his long journey, was taken by surprise, and losing his balance, he fell to the ground. He was not physically injured but, in another sense, he that day got broken bones, which forced him to repair to the Physician of souls. The change William MacIntosh underwent that day proved to be a saving one, for he developed into a most beautiful Christian character.

On the other side of the river there stood a cottage with its back towards the place where the congregation met, and in it there lived at that time, a saintly woman, then confined to bed. She was the widow of the famous Donald MacDougall, and a near relative of Dr. Angus MacIntosh of Tain. The day being warm and calm, the window of the room in which she lay, was open, and when her son, after the meeting, came to tell her about the speaking, he was both surprised and delighted to find that she had heard all that John Grant had spoken. John, it may be stated, had a powerful and far-reaching voice.

Dr. Angus MacIntosh had a brother, William, in Garbol, who used to get the use of a barn at Inverine which was lower down the valley and more convenient for the visitors when they attended the services at Moy than his own house. To this barn the kind-hearted man used to carry down blankets and food, for the use of the visitors. In this humble abode, a number of men were accommodated one year when John Grant was present. The barn was a primitive building, and there being no window in it

through which daylight could enter and none of the men having a watch, they could not be quite sure of the time. The result was that some of them had not got up as early as John would have wished, for he desired to begin the morning prayer-meeting at an hour that would not hinder them from reaching the place of public worship in time. He got in among his friends in his stocking soles, and was repeating the words of the 91st Psalm as he was passing among them to hurry them up,

“Upon the adder thou shalt tread,

“And on the lion strong ;

“Thy feet on dragons trample shall,

“And on the lions young.”

It was when John was speaking from the passage “a reed shaken with the wind” at a Sabbath evening ‘reading’ or prayer meeting that the well-known Sandy Elder was savingly awakened. It was Sandy who sat by John Grant when John was on his death bed. (See *Ministers and Men of the Far North*.)

On one occasion during a Communion, a young lad came into John’s house to whom he said, “You were at the Fellowship Meeting : can you remember anything you heard?” The youth replied, “Yes. I can recollect one thing that George Mackay, Golticlay, said, and it was this—“Cha’n ’eil sian de bheachd an duine nàduraich mu’ n Ti a chruthaich e, nach feum bhì air a losgadh le teine anns an anam, mar a bha Sielag a Dhaibhidh, mus cuir e clach de’n obair àraidh air a bonn.” “There is nothing of the natural man’s view of his Creator that will not require to be consumed with fire in the soul, as David’s Ziklag was, before He will set a single stone of His excellent work on that foundation.” When John heard the above quotation, he remarked, “Ah, he spoke truly.”

After the “Clearances”, John removed to Strathy and from thence to Thurso. After being a year or two there, he went to reside at Brubster, but it appears that he died

at Shebster. Major Wm. Innes of Sandside was particularly desirous that John should live on his property, and gave him a house in Shebster. John was very weak, and it was Sandy Elder, his own son in the faith, who brought him in his cart. The writer had this information from Sandy's son. John, it seems, lived less than a year after his removal to Shebster.

A company of Northern worthies were once returning from a Communion. They were joined by Norman MacLeod, Clactoll, who was to put up in the house of John Grant who was then in Strathy. On their way, Norman proceeded to examine some of his fellow travellers. One of the first he attempted to catechize was that deeply exercised Christian, Donald Sutherland, Thurso, of whom he asked the question—"If you were asked to state on oath whether you are a true child of God or a hypocrite, what would be your answer?" "Oh, I fear I am only the latter" was the answer. "Well that is my own opinion too" said Norman. When those that had purposed to spend the night in John Grant's house had arrived, one of them had informed their host of the catechizing on the way, and how Norman's treatment of Donald had troubled the latter. On hearing this, John turned to Norman and said, "If you have pained good Donald Sutherland, I am much displeased with you."

When Donald had got home, he took to his bed, for he was afraid that all his experience was only a delusion. John, having ascertained how despondent his worthy friend Donald was, set out to Thurso to visit him and found him greatly troubled by the fear that he was to be cast off for ever. "Well," said John to him, "What people do you love best? Is it the ungodly or the Lord's people?" "Well, I cannot deny but I prefer the company of those who fear the Lord." "And can you live without prayer?" "Oh well, I cannot live without, at least, attempting to pray." "And what hook do you like best?" "I think

I can say there is no book that I like as well as the Bible." "Oh, if that is the case" said John, "if you are sent to the place of torments, you will go to Satan and enquire if you can get a Bible there, and he will say 'No.' Then you will ask if there is a private place there where you can bend your knee in prayer and he will answer 'No.' You will ask him if there are any of the Lord's people there, with whom you can associate, and he will answer, 'No, there is none here, and never shall be', and with that he will thrust you outside his dominions."

John was once speaking of Job's words Chap. 23, 2, "My stroke is heavier than my groaning." "What can be the meaning of such a wail?" John asked, and then added, "Job's stroke was heavier than his groaning concerning it."

At another time, when referring to Psalm 146, 9, "the widow's stay, the orphan's help is he", John remarked—"The believer is an orphan when he has no present consciousness of the consolation of the promises of the Gospel."

John Grant was one of the Separatists who had ceased to attend the parish church. His favourite minister was Rev. Finlay Cook, who, when in Dirlot Mission, often called on him at Brubster. It was on one of these visits that he said to Mr. Cook—"Your soul has never cost me a prayer, but your coat has cost me many."

The date of his death is given on the grave stone as 26th May, 1829, aged 77, but Joseph Mackay, in his elegy which evidently was composed shortly after John's decease, states that he was called to his rest on 16th May.

GEORGE MACKAY, KILDONAN

George Mackay, catechist, was the son of Donald Mackay who was an elder in Kildonan, and catechist of

the parish during the ministry of Rev. Alex. Sage. George lived in Liriboll. His wife's maiden name was Beatrice MacBeath.

The Rev. Donald Sage describes him as "a man of deep and fervent piety, as well as of great natural ability; and as a public speaker, was an 'Apollos', eloquent and mighty in the Scriptures." At his first outset in his catechetical office, he was harsh in manner, and a terror to the timid and ignorant, but as he advanced in years, and in the Christian life, he mellowed exceedingly, and became a most attractive Christian character.

He gave evidence of piety at an early age, for while he was yet a young lad, he loved to associate with those who feared the Lord. John Grant then lived in Diabale, and notwithstanding his seeming sternness of manner, his company had a special charm for this youth. The local "Men" and John Grant in particular, took a prayerful interest in him, and dealt with him in a fatherly way, but they were too wise to thrust him hurriedly into a prominent place. They permitted him to attend the Saturday private prayer-meeting, and encouraged him to accompany them to sacramental gatherings in other parishes, which he was strongly desirous of doing, yet for a considerable time after, he had begun to attend the means of grace, they did not think it prudent to ask him to engage publicly in prayer.

Some time after George's interest in religious matters had manifested itself, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was to be dispensed in Tongue. About the middle of the appointed week, quite a number of men and women from Kildonan might have been seen journeying on foot to attend the services, and among them was young George. Their route lay through the heights of the parish of Garlbhallt. On former occasions, when passing this way, they were in the habit of resting in the house of a worthy man, who considered it a privilege to give hospitality to the Lord's people.

However, in that particular year, probably 1783, he, like many others in the North, was in straitened circumstances, owing to the scanty corn crop of the preceding year, for meal was sold at an almost prohibitive price.

As the Kildonan worthies moved westwards in small bands, the foremost company reached the end of the path leading to the house of the good man of Garbhallt, but instead of turning aside, as usual, they stood, and began to deliberate if they would call at his house or not, for though his hospitality was proverbial, they feared that he could ill afford to entertain so many. Some of the travellers were inclined to move on; others proposed that they should wait to hear John Grant's advice, for he happened to be walking with the hindmost company. When John had come up, some one asked him whether they should push on, or turn aside to their usual resting place. "We most assuredly shall visit our hospitable friend," said John, "and you shall see that there is wonderful provision awaiting us", and so saying he turned aside and was soon followed by his fellow travellers. No sooner had he moved in the direction of the house, than the good man could be seen hurrying to welcome them. He had watched the first group as they stood at the end of the path, and had no difficulty in knowing what had at first made them hesitate in coming straight up to the house as they were wont to do.

"You seem to be keeping very shy of my humble dwelling, good friends," said he, as he cordially saluted them. "Oh, some of us, no doubt," said John, "considered it out of question for such a large company to call on you in present circumstances, when it may be hard for you to provide for the wants of your own household, but I persuaded them to rest here as usual, for I believe we shall partake of a wonderful provision." "Oh you were quite right," said the hospitable host, "for I can assure you that a wonderful provision is awaiting you."

The company, including George Mackay, found an

ample repast awaiting them when they entered the Highland cottage. It consisted of large piles of oatcakes, with capacious wooden dishes, full of rich fresh milk, together with a supply of butter and curds. The kind host led John Grant to the head of the table. When the latter was seated, he looked around for his young friend, saying "C'àit am bheil Seòrusan?" (Where is Geordie?) for he had made up his mind that the lad should ask a blessing on the meal. But the young man was nowhere to be seen. At last, one of the company happened to look out through the small window in the front wall, and noticed George running with all speed across the moor. He had a presentiment that he was to be called to engage in prayer on that occasion, and hungry though he was, he preferred to continue his journey with an empty stomach than to attempt asking a blessing among so many outstanding Christians. On entering the room, he had sat behind the door, and after John Grant had passed in and was moving to the head of the table, he had quietly slipped out unobserved, which was an easy matter for the small window in the apartment did not admit much light, and the smoke that rose from the peat fire on the floor, aided him in carrying out his plan.

When John was told the young lad was hurrying from the house in the direction of Strathnaver, he said, "I know this is a temptation from Satan," and turning to one of the oldest Christians present, he asked the latter to accompany him to bring back their young friend. The two worthies shouted after him to come back, but this at first only spurred him on all the faster. However, when he saw that the two persisted in following him, and fearing lest they should over exert themselves, he stopped and waited till they came to where he was. John gently laid his hand on his arm and said, "I know this is a temptation from the enemy, and you must not give way; you must return with us." When the three entered, John made the modest lad to sit between himself and the other worthy who accom-

panied him. "Now George," said John very gently, but with a firmness that could not be mistaken, "we are all in need of a meal, but none of us shall partake of anything till you ask a blessing. We do not wish you to give us a sermon or lecture or a lengthy prayer, but until you ask a blessing, however brief you may be, we shall not taste any of the good things set before us." At last, in fear and trembling, George endeavoured to implore the Divine blessing, and helped by the prayerful sympathy of the Christian friends present, it is not to be wondered he got through the duty with much comfort.

"Now tell us," said John to his kind host, "how you were able to provide such a substantial meal?" "Well" the good man of the house replied, "two days ago I was much worried, for I expected to see you on your way to the Communion, yet I did not know how I could entertain you, for the meal chest was practically empty. After retiring to rest, I heard the loud barking of my dogs at the stream which flows hard by, and as the noise continued, I at last got up, and seizing my crook, I hurried out to the burn, where the collies were worrying a large otter, which with the help of my stick, I killed. Having secured the skin, it occurred to me that I might get sale for it in Thurso, and so I set out in the early morning with all speed, in the hope of finding a purchaser. I had not been long in Thurso, when I disposed of the fur to advantage, and with the price, was able to buy a considerable quantity of meal, which I took home with a glad heart. As soon as I returned, preparations were begun at once for baking the oatcakes which are before you, and which I trust you will enjoy." "Now friends," said John Grant, "did I not tell you that we were to partake of a wonderful provision?"

George could never forget his experience in Garbhallt, and in referring to the incident, he used to state his firm conviction that he might never have been privileged to be of use in the church publicly, had he refused on that

occasion to follow John Grant's advice, which he regarded as a voice from Heaven to him.

There was a man in Kildonan who used to follow the means of grace. On several occasions he was called to engage in prayer, but it was the same prayer he offered every time. Once at a private prayer-meeting, where a number of pious people were assembled, this man was seen approaching the house where they were. One who was present said to some that sat nearby—"This is such a man coming to our meeting. Let us try to rid him of his oft-repeated prayer." George Mackay, who was present, led in prayer, and while thus engaged, he of the one prayer rose and walked away. George concluded, as some thought, abruptly, and went after the man with the intention of taking him back. At last, he shouted after him, "Come and have a snuff." He returned with George to the meeting, and he regarded this incident as a turning point in his life.

George was very scathing in his criticism of ministers unless they were deeply experimental, as well as sound in their preaching. He had a deep insight into the mysteries of God's Word, and a way of expressing his thoughts that was most original. The writer has been told by John Gunn, Kinlochbervie, who knew him well, and who even corresponded with him, that he never heard any man who had such profound views of some portions of Scripture as George Mackay. He died at a very advanced age in 1843.

DONALD MATHESON, BARD, KILDONAN

Not a few of the native race of Kildonan possessed poetic talents of no mean order. The result was that when any of these had a grudge against his neighbour, he composed abusive songs in which all the failings of the offending individual were held up to ridicule. Matheson's servant

had come under the lash of a rough young man who maligned her in some expressive verses. Stung by his invective, she brought her grievances under her master's notice, who determined to put a stop to such spite-fomenting practices. Accordingly, he composed a song in which he showed the demoralizing influence of the vituperative doggerel on the composers, and sang it for the first time in a house where a number of the young people of the district were assembled. The leader of the lampooners was present, and when he heard the concluding words, it is said he took a hold of his broad blue bonnet and threw it into the fire and held it down with the tongs until it was reduced to ashes. When asked to explain his strange conduct, he replied, "The ashes of my bonnet will become cloth before I compose another offensive song." He then rose up and shook hands very cordially with Donald Matheson, and thanked him for the needed rebuke which he had administered. This youthful rhymer gave evidence in after life of being a changed man. Matheson's satire was the means of putting a stop to objectionable doggerel in the Strath.

A godly shoemaker in the heights of the parish lived on terms of great intimacy with Matheson. This craftsman's wife, a rather worldly woman, finding that the family exchequer was empty, and not feeling disposed to treat her husband's customers with any special forbearance, urged him one morning to go out to collect his debts. The good man got his staff and went out, but with no intention of dealing harshly with his debtors or even of referring to their arrears. He had not gone very far, when he met Donald Matheson. The shoemaker was overjoyed to see the pious bard, and all the more so because he now had an excuse for discontinuing the journey on which he had so reluctantly set out. He decided to return home, and insisted that Donald should accompany him.

When he entered his house with his friend, he said to

his wife who was surprised to see him back so soon—
"Chuir sibh mise a mach an diugh a bhean, airson airgid,
ach thàinig mi air ais thugaibh le òr." ("Wife, you sent
me out to-day for silver, but I have returned to you with
gold.") The shoemaker, it may be added, was the grand-
father of Donald Gunn, Causey-Mire, Westerdale, who was
at native of Kildonan, and at the "Clearances", when still
a young lad, removed to Caithness. He was a fine type of
the good man of the north. A guileless, gentle and lovable
man, he was a favourite with young and old. His humility
was very marked. Sometimes at Communion, when asked
to engage in prayer either at prayer-meetings or at family
worship, he was heard to say to the man that presided,
"Temporal judgment will fall on you for asking me to
engage." Like his countryman, Donald Mackay, Clais-
chreggan, whom he resembled not a little, he was very brief
in public religious exercises and had a very quaint way
of expressing himself. He died at a very advanced age
in the spring of 1886.

DONALD MACKAY, KILDONAN

This was one of the most outstanding men that the
parish of Kildonan, or even the county of Sutherland pro-
duced. He lived in a romantic spot called Ach-an-t-
sambraidh, on the left bank of the river Ilidh, and about
a mile below Suisgill. Mr. Sage states that he "flourished
between the years 1740 and 1768, and was one of the most
eminent Christians of whom the county of Sutherland can
boast. Like many of the good people in the North at that
time, he was in the habit of frequenting sacramental
gatherings far and near. At one time, somewhat early in
his Christian course, he accompanied a number of the
worthies from his native Strath to a Communion in a

certain parish on the East coast. For several days before the Communion services, preparations were being made in many of the houses for accommodating visitors. There was one crofter who considered it a privilege to have an opportunity of giving hospitality to the Lord's people. He kept some sheep, and among them was a fine black wether, which he set apart for the use of his expected guests. He made known his resolution to his wife, who at first did not approve of his proposal, for she deemed it too extravagant. She was not averse to receiving the strangers, but she was reluctant to make such a sacrifice.

After public worship was concluded on one of the opening days of the Communion, a number of worthies were put up in this house, and among them was Donald "Direach", as he was familiarly known. As they sat at the table, Donald was requested to ask a blessing. It is said that he began with the striking words—"Tha fhios agad Fhéin nach e mult dubh no glas a thug sinne an so, ach a dh' iarraidh an Uain." ("Thou knowest that it is not to seek a black or grey wether that we have come here, but to seek the Lamb.") The woman blushed, for she thought that her husband had told the stranger about her niggardliness, and afterwards she asked him why he had told the good man of her unwillingness to part with her favourite wether. Her husband assured her that he had not uttered a word to Donald, or any other of the guests of their conversation about the black wether.

The first time he was present at Kilmuir Communion, was during the ministry of the famous Mr. Porteous. At the "Question" Meeting on the Friday, signs were asked of those who had "put off the old man". Mr. Porteous who presided at the meeting had never met our worthy before, but as he was known to some of the elders, his name was given by one of them to the Minister, who called him to speak. With characteristic conciseness, Donald expressed himself thus—

"Theirinn mu gach aon duine,
 "As an deach an seann duine,
 "Gum faigh c faile an t' seann duine,
 "Dheth gach fear as nach deach an seann duine."

(English)

"I would say of every man
 "Out of whom has gone the old man
 "That he will get the odour of the old man
 "Of every man out of whom has *not* gone the old man."

and then sat down. Mr. Porteous was so struck with the laconic statement of the stranger that he got up in the tent, and said, "O Dhòmhnuille, is dìreach thu fhéin, agus is dìreach do bhreith." ("Oh Donald, thou art upright thyself and upright is thy judgment.") This remark greatly amused the Sutherlandshire people who were present, for the Minister inadvertently referred to the name by which their countryman was better known in his native place.

Donald's hunger for the "Bread of Life" was very remarkable. He has been known to leave home in the time of harvest, on hearing that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was to be dispensed in one of the parishes of Caithness. There he sat at the English services, though he knew no English, stating that he understood the words, "Lord Jesus Christ", and that none of the hearers could understand anything better. This singular Christian went round his acquaintances of the household of faith, to take his last leave of them, when he apprehended his end to be near. The reason which he assigned for this presentiment was that as the leprosy had now covered all his flesh (referring to his experience of indwelling sin), he believed the High Priest of his profession would soon pronounce him *clean*. The end came peacefully soon after.

ANGUS MACKAY, KILDONAN

Angus Mackay or "Aonghas Mór" as he was commonly called on account of his more than ordinary stature, lived in Garbhallt, in the heights of the parish. He was a man of fervent piety and of remarkable spiritual-mindedness. In following his ordinary occupation of shepherd or grass-keeper, he had frequent opportunities which he used to advantage, of meditating on heavenly things. In the solitudes of the hills he earnestly sought and often enjoyed the gracious presence of his Creator. Such exercise of soul gave singular weight and freshness to his words, when he engaged in religious duties. Sometimes his mind seemed to be quite absorbed in musing on the truths of God's Word. On one occasion in spring, he was busy removing manure to a plot of ground where he intended to plant potatoes. His wife helped him to lift the creel, in which he carried the manure to the other end of the field. He had not been very long at his work when his wife was surprised to see him return, not with the creel empty, but full just as he had left her. When she asked him why he had not emptied the creel, he was at first unwilling to explain matters, but when pressed, his answer was, "I forgot. I was thinking of the children of Israel at the passage of the Red Sea." He was a great wrestler in prayer. His remarkable elevation of mind could be seen even when at family meals, with solemn voice and often with uplifted arms, he invoked the Divine blessing. After family worship in the evening, it was customary for him to go out to a secluded spot not far from his dwelling to spend some time in private devotions before retiring to rest, and when he had much enlargement, his petitions, though unintentionally on his part, became audible to anyone who might be near. In this way his family were aware that it was his habit after committing himself and relatives

and Christian friends to the keeping of the Shepherd of Israel, to remember all the households in the Strath, and to pray for them in a certain order, beginning on one side of the valley, and generally concluding with the family of his respected friend at Griamachdary on the other side. One night, while engaged in this way, he had unusual liberty, and remained so long that his wife became afraid that he had taken ill, and sent one of the sons out to see if anything was the matter with him. The young lad soon returned and said to his mother, "Father will soon be in, for he is just now at Griamachdary." But though Angus enjoyed much of the Divine presence in private, he availed himself of every possible opportunity of attending the public means of grace, notwithstanding his long distance from the nearest place of worship.

One summer, shortly before the Communion in Rogart, he was busy at sheep-shearing at some distance from his home. As he did not expect to get through his work before Thursday, it was arranged that he and his wife should set out very early on Friday morning to reach in time for the Fellowship Meeting. He discovered, however, on Wednesday, that he could manage to set out to the Communion the following morning, as the work had been got through sooner than he had expected. When he mentioned this to his wife, she remarked that, as she did not look for his return so soon, she was afraid she could not make the necessary preparation for setting out with him on the morrow. "Oh I am quite aware, my dear," he said, "that it will not be convenient for you to accompany me, and so you may leave whenever you get ready, but you will allow me to go alone, as I must make use of my privileges while I have them, for I am persuaded that you shall be spared to attend many a sacramental service after I have entered eternity." His presentiment proved to be true, for his worthy partner survived him for the long period of twenty years.

Angus was a most impressive speaker. His intellectual

gifts, his stalwart figure, his powerful though pleasant voice, his animated delivery and solemn manner and not least his heavenly-mindedness combined to sustain the attention of his hearers.

This good man never owned much of this world's wealth, but he knew much of the blessedness of them that cast their burden on the Lord. Once he set out for Strath Halladale, having in his pocket a pound note, with which he intended to pay his shoemaker's bill. On reaching his destination, he discovered that he had lost his note, and so was unable to settle the account. On returning home, he had to explain what had happened. His wife was very perturbed, and asked how they were to pay their way when the family exchequer was so empty. Angus was calm, and gently replied that the Giver of all good could provide, and send even the actual missing note. Humanly speaking, there was but faint probability that a note dropped on a high wind-swept moor, could ever be recovered, but the worthy man's hope was not disappointed. A few months later, a poor but decent pedlar, who used to spend some of his time in the uplands of the county, happened to pass through Kildonan, and, in a tuft of rushes, in an exposed part of the moorland, he noticed a piece of paper, which out of curiosity he picked up. On opening its folds, he found a pound note. In the first house he came to, he asked whether they had lost any money, and was informed that their neighbour in Garbhallt had lost a pound note some time before. On reaching Garbhallt, he was told by the good wife, in answer to his enquiry, how her husband had lost the note. But the stranger insisted on having particulars before handing over the money. "Can you remember the number of the note?" he asked. "No, indeed, I cannot," was the reply, "but if you have kept the piece of wrapper in which the note was enclosed, I have still in the house the newspaper out of which it was taken." An old paper was spread on the table, out of which a

portion had been torn. The traveller produced a piece of weather-stained paper which exactly fitted into the rent part. The honest man was thoroughly satisfied, and Angus recovered his pound.

The removal of this good man from the church on earth was sorely felt by his many Christian friends in Sutherland and elsewhere, and took place in June, 1867.

His wife, whose maiden name was Janet Ferguson, was a native of Clyne Milton (on the borders of Clyne). Her ancestors on her father's side lived for some generations in Strath Brora, and there is a tradition in the family that they were descended from a Covenanter, who had fled to the North in the stormy days of persecution and found shelter under the shield of the pious Earl of Sutherland. But Janet Ferguson had something even better than Covenanting blood to commend her to her future husband, for she was one that truly feared the Lord. It is said that when he was paying his addresses to her, some one remarked to him that it was vain for him to hope to be a successful suitor. Angus was not perturbed, but calmly replied, "I leave the matter in the Lord's hands, for He has given me a promise that she is to be my wife." She proved a true helpmeet, and on account of her true godliness, was held in the highest esteem in the whole surrounding districts where she is still affectionately spoken of as good "Granny Garbhallt." She was called to her rest on 13th April, 1887, in the eighty-second year of her age.

Of the family of this God-fearing couple, a son—William—became a Baptist minister. He was trained in Spurgeon's Pastors' College, and laboured in Australia, where he died. A married daughter who lived in Strath Halladale, followed closely in the footsteps of her worthy parents.

Angus had a younger brother who lived with them. He was a most saintly young man, who was fast ripening for the "better country." On one occasion, he attended

the Communion at Reay, during the ministry of the Rev. Finlay Cook, where he could say with the enraptured disciple, "It is good for us to be here." On his return, a neighbour chided him for having left home. Robert gently replied, "It is because I considered eternity more enduring than time that I set out all the way to Reay." He died at Garbhallt, at a comparatively early age, not many years after the Disruption. Angus and his wife, as well as his brother Robert, are buried in the graveyard at Achanecan.

DONALD MACKAY, KILDONAN

Donald Mackay, who lived in Imderscaig in the heights of Strathnaver, was one of the "men" of that Strath. He lived very near his Maker, and had much of the Divine mind in reference to cases which he brought before the Mercy-seat, and on that account, exercised persons and such as were in perplexity, frequently sought his counsel and his prayers. They consulted him all the more readily because of his affectionate disposition, and fatherly manner. It is said that when the worthy Joseph Mackay had thoughts of joining the army for the second time, he called on Donald, among others of his Christian friends, who kept a special meeting for prayer in connection with the matter. Joseph was greatly encouraged when Donald told him that that passage had come forcibly before his mind—"A thousand at thy side shall fall." Ps. 91, 7.

He was noted for his meek and forgiving spirit. One spring, he went to Caithness along with some of his neighbours to buy seed-corn. They had two horses, and at a certain part of the way, as they were crossing a piece of fallow ground, for apparently there were no roads, a surly fellow came out of a house, and without the least provocation, struck Donald with a stick. The good man calmly looked at the boor, and merely said—"Oh man, I should be very far from thinking of treating you in such a way."

His tenderness of conscience was very remarkable. One Sabbath morning, he had been outside for a considerable time at private prayer, and on his return, he took in an armful of peats from the stack, as he had been in the habit of doing on week-days. When his wife told him it was the Lord's day, he went to a quiet spot and was not seen till evening. Though some of the many worthies of his native Strath might surpass him in speaking to the question, yet few of them excelled him in prayer, and discerning people were always glad to hear him pleading at the Throne of Grace.

Once at a prayer-meeting held at Farr on one of the days of the Communion, Donald, who by that time had become rather deaf, was present. John MacIntosh, the catechist of the parish presided, and after a few of the "men" had engaged in prayer, he asked who was next to lead the devotions. "Oh call Donald," one of the men answered, "for he cannot hear others himself, and I am quite certain the Most High hears him."

When he was evicted from Truderscraig at the "Clearances", he went to Badenloch, but was again evicted, and came to Ach-na-b-uaiigh, where he and other houseless families got shelter from an officer of the name of Gunn who had a few townships in leasehold. But at the expiry of the lease, Donald had once more to seek another earthly abode which he found in Griamachdary on the farm of Adam Gordon, who was a tacksman, and there he lived till he was called to the "house of many mansions" about the year 1830. His wife was a woman of true piety.

GRANTS OF GRIAMACHDARY

The Grants were descended from a godly race of Grants, who, hailing originally from Speyside, lived in the Strath of Kildonan for many years. Seemingly, they

belonged to that sept of Sutherland Grants called "Pronntaich". The following tradition is given of the name. Four brothers left Speyside and came to Sutherland with floated timber. Two of them took to trading, on a small scale, by sea, and were called "Coalasaich". The other two took to land cultivation and were called "Pronntaich", because they broke up the rough ground.

The ancestors of these Grants through seven generations were noted for their godliness, and those of them who were for years associated with Griamachdary, worthily maintained the best traditions of their forefathers. In the family were three brothers, John, George and Alexander—all of whom were men of outstanding piety. They were born in Feith-na-fala, not far from Achnamoine. John, the eldest remained unmarried. For some time he lived in Bad-an-t-seabhaig. He then seems to have lived with his brother George in Breacachadh. Donald Grant, Strath-Halladale, a very godly man, was a first cousin of these three Grants. Although plain in features, he adorned his Christian profession by a beautifully consistent life. Like his cousins, he was a faithful reprovcr of sin. When in summer he noticed his neighbours on the other side of the Halladale water working later on Saturday than he considered proper, he would come to the river and shout to them to cease.

In Breacachadh, George married a daughter of Alasdair Beag or Fraser, who prior to the evictions, lived in Dalbhuie, above Suisgill. It is said that on the day of the marriage, after the ceremony had been performed, the married couple suddenly disappeared, and could not be found when the party were ready to sit at the table. But a herdboyc knew of a secret hollow, where the bridegroom was wont to retire for private devotions, and so a messenger was sent to that spot, and there George and his young wife were found engaged in prayer. George afterwards removed to Griamachdary, where his brother John lived with him.

John was a meek, lovable Christian to whom the Lord was pleased to make known His mind in connection with many providential events. He died at Griamachdary on 15th June, 1855, aged 85 years.

George served in the 93rd Highlanders, and was with that regiment in the battle of New Orleans, where he lost an arm. He was a firm disciplinarian, a faithful reprover of sin and a most staunch Sabbatarian. Probably there were few houses, if any, in the whole country, where the Sabbath day was more strictly observed. No unnecessary work was allowed. Saturday was in a very literal sense a day of preparation. Peats were broken, the breakfast dishes were laid on one end of the table and the dinner dishes on the other. Even the old-fashioned "snecks" or door fastenings were covered with paper, so that in closing the doors, one might not break the silence of the holy day.

Poor men that tramped the countryside always found hospitality in Griamachdary, and if they came on a Saturday, they would not be allowed to continue their journey until Monday. The seriously-minded among these homeless wanderers would enjoy the rest and religious exercises of the household, but there were some who would resent the banning of all conversation of a secular nature.

George Grant died on 1st May, 1857, aged 75 years. Both John and George are buried in Achaneccan, near Kinbrace.

Alexander Grant the youngest brother, also served in the army. From being a sergeant in the 79th Regiment, he was promoted to a lieutenantcy in the Royal Scots.

He was a most consistent Christian, and one that took deep interest in the Lord's cause. A most intelligent level-headed man, he could express himself readily, not only in his native Gaelic, but also in English either by mouth or pen. It is said that on one occasion, while home on furlough, when his regiment was soon expected to leave for active service, he called to see a pious woman, who lived

near his native place, to whom that passage occurred, Ps. 91. 7—" Bidh mìle tuiteam sìos ri d' thaobh, deich mìle fòs ri d' dheis; Ach olc dhiubh sud cha tig a' d' chòir no' m fagus duit am feasd." That Scripture greatly cheered him, and it was true in his case.

It is said that he lived in Cnoc-Finn in the heights of his native parish, but afterwards removed to Stromness. He married Margaret, third daughter of Adam Gordon of Griamachdary.

Rev. John MacDonald, the first Free Church minister of Helmsdale was once in Griamachdary on a visit to the Grants. George Grant gave him the use of his pony on his return journey, and sent a lad with him to take the horse back. On their way, they came to a certain tree near the road, and there the pony halted and refused to move on. The Minister asked the lad what was wrong with the horse. "Oh," said the youth "that is the tree to which my master ties it, while he retires to pray." On hearing those words, the Minister dismounted to engage in private devotions, and afterwards he told his experience to his own congregation.

JAMES MACDONALD, KILDONAN

James MacDonald belonged to a branch of the Clan Donald that went, in the North, by the name of Cadaich or MacAdies. They were chiefly located in the parishes of Clync, Loth and Kildonan. These MacAdies were exceedingly talented and were remarkable for their ready wit, their retentive memory and their rhyming, and in some cases, poetic gifts. James was a native of the Strath of Kildonan, where he spent the first thirty years of his life. It is said he lived in Diobale, in which township John Grant resided until he removed to Strathy.

James was savingly awakened at the age of 18 years, while standing at the door of Halkirk church, when it was

crowded to overflowing. When about 30 years of age, he left his native district, and got a croft in the parish of Reay. He had not been many years there, when he was appointed catechist. He lived at first in the uplands of the parish at a place called Baile-na-beinne, about a quarter of a mile from Brawlbin, and it was there that his son John, afterwards the famous minister of Ferintosh, was born. He latterly removed to Upper Dounreay, in Caithness.

James's mental endowments were of an exceptionally high order. Though unable to read, so retentive was his memory that he could repeat a great portion of the Scriptures with absolute accuracy. He could express his profound views of Divine truth in language terse and striking. His prudence and his pleasant manner were of great help to him in the discharge of his duties as catechist, in which office he laboured for over forty years. He was a warm-hearted and lovable man, and singularly gentle in his dealings with the people, for it was his aim to draw rather than to drive them. To one that had once found fault with him for not using more severity in reproving the careless, he gave the characteristic reply, "If both of us were to go to the hill to catch wild horses, and you had a whip and I had corn, which of us, do you think, would catch the greater number? First secure them by means of the corn, and then use your whip as you find it necessary."

A good and zealous, though possibly not over-charitable woman was lamenting the state of the times. James said, "The wind with which you are winnowing is too strong."

James, like many of the Northern worthies in his day, was much given to the use of figurative language. It is said that when he was in extreme old age, he met a crofter from the West who had come to Caithness to buy seed corn. After the usual salutation, the stranger enquired of the catechist, whom he did not recognize, whether he could supply him with seed. "I have no corn to spare", said James, "though all the land as far as you can see belongs

to my Father". "Do you really mean to tell me" the man asked in astonishment, "that your father is still alive?" "Indced He is", was the reply. "Dear me", said the other, "your father must be exceedingly weak since you look so aged." "Not at all" was the reply, "My Father's strength is quite at His best." ("Tha m' Athair an là as fheàrr a bha E riamh.")

Once, towards the close of James's life, a good though simple man who had heard much about him, went from a distant part of the country to Reay to see him. The stranger hailed from a parish which at one time enjoyed the ministrations of an able preacher of the Gospel for whom the catechist had great regard. On learning where his visitor lived, the host enquired whether there were good pipers in his part of the country. "Pipers", exclaimed the man who did not see the force of the question, "What possible interest can you have in pipers?" "When I was youug", said James "there was a grand piper in your parish." After a pause, James again asked—"Are there any witches where you come from?" "I am surprised" said his honest, though rather dull friend, "that an old man like you should care to talk about witches." "Well there were witches in your side of the country at one time," said the catechist, "for are not witches regarded as having power of abstracting the substance from milk, and if I were in the company of those that could possibly supply me with a large quantity of the 'sincere milk of the Word', and with them that can proclaim the glad sound of the Gospel, though you consider me infirm, you would be surprised how I could dance still if I had a good piper."

As an instance of James's prayerful nearness to his Maker, it is said that on the day of the battle of Waterloo, James happened to be in Thurso. (The Records of the Presbytery of Caithness shew that in 1815, the Communion was held in Thurso on the third Sabbath of June, the day on which the battle of Waterloo was fought.) Instead of

going to the house where he stayed, after the close of the service, James moved away abruptly and spent the evening and part of the night in prayer among the rocks near Pennyland. On the following day, some of his Christian friends enquired of him why he had disappeared so suddenly. He stated that it came very forcibly before his mind that the British soldiers were in action, and when asked what he thought was the result of the engagement, "Oh I have good news," James replied, "for that passage came to my mind with singular power, 'no weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper.'" Is. 54.

It is said that Ensign Joseph Mackay, who took part in that memorable battle, thought he heard as if the voice of the godly catechist of Reay was praying for him in the midst of the fray. On his return, he called on James, and on comparing notes, he discovered that his good friend's spirit had been prayerfully following him on that day.

After the death of his second wife, he had a very pious woman as his housekeeper—Barbara Forbes, one that looked upon it as a privilege to minister to the aged saint.

He entered his everlasting rest in 1830, at the advanced age of 95. A plain stone marks his grave in the old churchyard of Reay.

DAVID GUNN, KILDONAN

David Gunn lived in Achineccan in the Strath of Kildonan. After the "Clearances", he removed to Caithness and lived in Strath Beag, above Westerdale. After his marriage, he lived for some time in Clagin, Kildonan. He was catechist for many years in Halkirk. A man of primitive simplicity and rare godliness, he was greatly beloved. His wife, Catherine Ross, was the daughter of Rev. John Ross, Kildonan. She was as remarkable for

her deep piety as for her prepossessing appearance. To Satan's devices, she was no stranger, and sore were the conflicts in which she had sometimes to engage with the Adversary.

David was often in straitened circumstances, but such providential trials only made him have recourse the oftener to Him whose name is Jehovah Jireh—"the Lord will provide". One Sabbath, his wife had no food in the house for the morning meal. The husband went to church that day without breaking his fast, and his wife was afraid he might faint on the way. In the course of the day, as the young children were crying for bread, one of them happened to lift the lid of the meal-chest, and on looking in, he exclaimed, "Why is it that we are hungry and plenty here to eat?" When the astonished mother came to the meal-chest, she saw there a considerable quantity of meal. When the good man returned from church, he found a welcome, if plain, meal awaiting him. Whether the meal had been in the chest before and was hidden in some corner, or whether some kind neighbour had opened the unbarred door during the night and unknown to the household, deposited the food in the meal-chest, or, as the good people themselves believed at the time, this was another case, like the widow of Zarephath's handful of meal in a barrel, it is not possible to say with certainty. One thing is sure, the worthy couple on that Sabbath afternoon recognized the hand of Him Who gives food to all flesh in the provision made for their outward wants, and with grateful hearts, they acknowledge His loving kindness.

David passed away in 1827.

WILLIAM SUTHERLAND, KILDONAN

William Sutherland, Forsinard, was probably born sometime before the middle of the eighteenth century. In

his prime, he was physically one of the most powerful men even in Strath Halladale, where not a few could be found who were noted for their bodily strength. There was a heavy boulder called the "cow" and another the "calf" which he could lift but which ordinary men could not move. But he came to be more widely known for the depth of his piety than for the strength of his arms, though his well-knit frame served him in good stead in many a long journey in attending the public means of grace, for he lived at a great distance from any place of public worship. The Halladale meeting-house where services were held occasionally by a missionary-minister was about ten miles from his home, while the parish church of Reay must have been over twelve miles even across the moor.

One Sabbath morning in the summer season, after walking all the way to Reay, he found the church doors locked and was told by a boy who was herding near the glebe that there was to be no service, as the minister was away from home. But instead of returning home immediately, he sat down on the threshold of the church door and addressing his Creator, he said in Gaelic—"Tha searmaid agam ort" (I claim a sermon from Thee"). The Lord of the house indeed dealt bountifully with this lover of Zion's gates, for while all alone as far as human fellowship was concerned, he began to read and to meditate on God's Word, and was so feasted, that he became oblivious to the flight of time, and remained until fully the ordinary time for the dismissal of the congregation had passed. That was one of the happiest days of his life, for seldom did he enjoy so much of the Divine presence as he did then. When he rose to go home, he took out his mull and secured a pinch between his fingers, but such was the exercise of his mind on his outward journey, that he did not take his snuff till he was near his house at the Alltan Beithe.

GEORGE MACLEOD, DALNAHA

There was another godly man of the same name in Strathmore, George MacLeod, Dalnaha. His father, Joseph MacLeod, lived in Forsinain and was one of the sub-tenants of John Gunn, who was tacksman. When Forsinain was "cleared" in 1807, John Gunn got Dyke in lieu of it, and took with him his former sub-tenants—Joseph MacLeod and Joseph Mackay. Joseph MacLeod removed from Dyke in 1828 and came to Dalnaha where he died on 26th November, 1845, aged 80, and is buried in Achrenny.

Joseph's son George, served for some time in the shop of Mr. Alex. Sinclair, Thurso. He was a particularly prayerful and tender-hearted Christian. Once he was in the house at Dalnaha, when that Scripture was powerfully impressed on his mind:—"Could ye not watch with Me one hour?" He did not know why that truth had taken such hold of him, but wrapping his plaid around him, he went outside and spent all that night in prayer, and found before returning home that passages of God's Word that previously had been dark, were now fraught with most cheering light. In a fortnight after that, he was called to his rest.

Of George, it might be truly said that he was a lover of good men. It was his delight out of his little earnings, to help, as far as he was able, such of the household of faith as were in straits. He died unmarried on 16th March, 1848, aged 48 years, and is buried in Achrenny. He had a brother Alexander, who was a meek and pious man. He died at Dalnaha in 1859, aged 66 years. Alexander's son John, was one that truly feared the Lord. He was called to his rest at the early age of 33 years.

HECTOR MUNRO, FORSINARD, KILDONAN

Hector Munro lived at Tigh an Eas, Forsinard, and was the seventh link in a bright chain of godly men. Once he said to his son John, "I am the seventh generation of them that feared the Lord, and if you break the chain, it were better for you that you were not born."

He made it a rule to go to church according to the direction of the wind, so as to have it in his favour when leaving home. Sometimes he would go to Achness, other times to Reay or Dirlot. Once he and his wife, who was a good woman, left for church. Hector that day wished to go to Achness, but his wife was inclined to go to Halsary, so Hector accompanied her till they reached the top of a little rising ground, and then left her and proceeded to Achness. The wife had not gone far when she returned and made after her husband, for she thus reasoned, "If I am to be with my husband in eternity, I intend to be with him as much as possible in this life, for I have no doubt he is going to Heaven."

ANN SINCLAIR, STRATH HALLADALE

Ann Sinclair was the sister of William and Donald Sinclair of Trantlemore. She was married to one George Campbell in Cul-Mhór, near the foot of the Strath. She was a very outstanding Christian, lively and eminently prayerful, one in whom the Word of God dwelt richly. It was said she often had family worship at 4 a.m. There were of the first marriage a son, Hugh, and a daughter. The son was one that feared the Lord. He was married to a sister of Dr. Mackay, Free North Church, Inverness. They were evicted from Halladale and went to Brubster. When Ann Sinclair lived in Cul-Mhór, her house, owing

to its situation and her hospitality, was a resting place for good people especially from the west, on their way to Communion.

Once a company of worthies, who had called at her house were on their way to a Communion in Caithness. When they left in the morning, she resolved to accompany them, though not intending to go far, as she carried an infant in her arms. As they proceeded, they were engaged in a discussion, for it was usual in those days when Christian friends were together that they exchanged views on some point of their experience. So interested did Ann become in the edifying conversation of her friends, that it was near Scrabster, a distance little short of twelve miles, that she remembered where she was.

Her second husband, George Mackay, was a man of sincere piety. They spent all the time on their way from the place of their marriage to their home, speaking of the Word. They lived in Brubster. Ann's very presence was like a tonic to believers of the "Mr. Fearing" type. She was a frequent and welcome visitor in the house of her neighbour, Alexander Elder, whom she often saluted on entering in words of Scripture. His son could recall in old age how Ann would repeat with much feeling, such a passage as—"Mór-bheannaicheam a stòr gu pàilt ; diolam a bochd le lòn," (Ps. 132, 15) as her morning greeting.

CHAPTER IX

PARISH OF ASSYNT

JOHN MACKENZIE, ASSYNT

IN Clachtoll, there lived towards the end of the eighteenth century, an eminently godly man of the name of John Mackenzie, or as he was familiarly called, Ian MacUilleam.

In his time, there was a teacher in the township of Stoer, John McLeod, whose wife "Greudach" took ill, and her case appeared to be so serious that her husband expressed a desire to let Ian MacUilleam know about her illness. Now it happened that one of the pupils attending Stoer school was a daughter of Captain Kenneth Mackenzie, Ledbeg—a young lady who afterwards became the wife of Rev. John Kennedy of Redcastle. This young girl somehow overheard the teacher, when he spoke of sending a message to Ian MacUilleam, and feeling sorry for her instructor in his trying circumstances, she resolved to go to the saintly MacUilleam herself, and though she was young, she thought that, on account of her social position, the good old man would not resent her coming to him. When she reached Clachtoll, she found MacUilleam inside at the fireside. He noticed the downcast look of the girl, as she entered, and on his asking what was wrong, she told him the teacher's fears about his wife. "You stay here", he said, "until I return from the barn." He had not been very long in the barn, when he came in with a happy smile on his face, and said, "Go, my young girl to 'Greudach', and tell her that many a tear she shall

yet shed over her husband's grave." That actually took place, for she survived her husband many years.

Ian MacUilleam like the most of the worthies of Assynt in his day, male and female, had some of the spirit of the old bards. One verse of his which has been preserved is—

"Cha'n aithne dhomh cùis fharmaid,

"Gu dearbh fo'n ghréin,

"Ach neach tha toilicht anns a' chreidimh,

"Leis an staid 'am bheil e fhéin."

(I know of no one under the sun truly to be envied but he who has faith in God and is contented with his state.)

DONALD MACKENZIE, CATECHIST, ASSYNT

Eachan Mackenzie was the first catechist of Assynt. He was a burning and a shining light. He served for twelve years in the Fencibles, and was in Holland with the army. He was succeeded in the office by his brother's son, Donald Mac 'Omhuill, a man whose labours were greatly blessed. Donald Mac 'Omhuill was always neat in his attire. In old age, at any rate, he dressed in superfine black cloth, wore a silk hat and carried an umbrella, an article which very few, if any, of the men in the district at that time possessed.

On one occasion, he happened to be in the heights of Assynt, where he was expected to hold a meeting on Sabbath morning in the house of Roderick MacLeod (Ruairidh Og) who was afterwards Gaelic teacher in Argyllshire. On that Sabbath morning, Donald Mackenzie seemed to be much exercised; and he was noticed to have gone seven times to secret prayer before he began the meeting. At length the most of the people had gathered, and after a blessing had been asked on the Word, Donald stood up to read a Psalm—some say it was the forty-fifth—when a young girl, gaudily dressed, came in. The good man's spirit seemed to be grieved, when he saw the vanity of the

thoughtless young maiden, and turning round, with his eye on her, he exclaimed in a most solemn tone, "O earth, earth, earth, hear the Word of the Lörd." The words went as an arrow to the heart of the young girl, who afterwards became one of the brightest Christians in the whole county—Marion MacLeod, Elphin.

When the Assynt professing people were carried away by the influence of Norman MacLeod, it is said Donald Mac 'Omhuill, in a dream, saw an exceedingly fine-looking man, who said to him, "There is a great quantity of unsound meat coming ashore at present at Clachtoll, but have nothing to do with it." This made him keep aloof from Norman MacLeod and his associates. Dr. Kennedy was wont to remark—"I used to be struck with Donald's solemnity and fervency in religious exercises in my lightest hours, and even then I was never wearied of his company, when he used to call at my father's house."

Donald died in April, 1861, and was succeeded as catechist by James Mackenzie.

Donald's wife was a decidedly pious woman. She was Christina Munro, and belonged to Achinelvich. Her mother was a deeply exercised Christian. When Alexander Kerr passed through deep waters and was much tempted, he would often, at night or in the early morning, when he thought no one was astir, move out to the sea shore, but invariably he found Mrs. Munro, who had taken a prayerful interest in him there wrapped in her plaid. It was not till Alistair had come to the liberty of the Gospel that this "mother in Israel" ceased to pay her nightly visits to the beach.

A stranger who was a good and exercised man and given to express himself metaphorically, came to Achinelvich. He had a desire to spend the night where he could find some that were like-minded with himself. He called at a cottage and was invited by the mistress of the house to enter. "But," said the stranger, "I do not care to put

up save in a house where Satan dwells and where his presence is felt." "Oh dear me," said the woman in consternation, "there is no such house here." The man made his way to the home of Mrs. Munro, who offered to extend hospitality to him. He again stated the conditions on which he would care to enter. The good woman who was not ignorant of Satan's devices, at once understood what he meant and gave him a most cordial welcome, remarking that he certainly had found such a dwelling as he was in quest of, for she was only too conscious of the presence of the evil one.

On one occasion, Mrs. Munro and her daughter Christina, probably while the latter was still unmarried, had purposed to attend a Communion at a place some distance from home. The daughter had roasted two salt herrings for provision by the way, but the mother asked her to prepare a third herring, as she was convinced that some one would join them on the journey. After they had walked a very considerable distance and had come to a streamlet, the daughter remarked that she began to feel somewhat faint and proposed to help herself to part of her fare. "Have a little patience" said the mother, "for we shall soon fall in with one in need of food." They had only gone a short distance, when they noticed a woman running towards them. This was the wife of a shepherd, who also desired to attend the Communion, but whose husband had no sympathy with her in religious matters. She was afraid he might try to prevent her from going to the ordinance. She was exhausted and was glad to join Mrs. Munro and her daughter in partaking of their plain repast.

NORMAN MACLEOD, THE SEPARATIST, ASSYNT

Norman MacLeod lived in Port-a-Chreadhaich, Clach-toll. When in Aberdeen, at the University, Norman, along

with a few evangelical students, including his countryman and companion—Alexander MacLeod, afterwards minister of Uig and Rogart—had formed a society, in which they bound themselves to resist the influence of the “Moderates” among students and professors. It is said that a popular discourse, which he was called to deliver before some of the professors and students, was so severe in denunciation of the “Moderatism” taught from most of the divinity chairs, at that time, that he was rusticated and so was practically expelled from the halls of the Church of Scotland. The other evangelical students, including Alexander MacLeod, though equally orthodox, were less sweeping in their discourses which were sustained, and as they were let through, they did not see their way to sever their connection with the church. Norman, seeing that his fellow-students who had banded themselves to bear testimony against the errors of the day, remained in communion with the church, was unsparing in condemning them—not excepting his friend, Alexander MacLeod. His influence in his native parish, in which at that time were very many outstanding Christians, was almost unbounded. He succeeded in winning to his side all the professing people in Assynt, including Ian Mór and his wife, Seònad Mhór, the parents of Alexander MacLeod. There were two exceptions—Donald Mac 'Omhuill and Alasdair Mackenzie, father of James Mackenzie, the catechist. Norman was in the habit of going to Mr. John Kennedy when in Assynt, for assistance in learning Latin and Greek. Mr. Kennedy was struck with his extraordinary talents. Unfortunately they became alienated. Very few people could read in those days, and it was the custom that one of those who could, would read a portion of Scripture as the people were gathering to Church. Norman when at home between sessions, was accustomed to do so, and it is said that he used the occasion to raise a testimony against the errors of the day. Mr. Kennedy thought it

was rather presumptuous on the part of a youth to put himself forward in such a way, and that caused a coolness between them.

He was on one occasion, after he had taken up the position of a separatist, in Clais-nam-buaille, Lairg, at a Communion. A number of his followers accompanied him. He sat until the end of the Action sermon, and then he and his followers left the congregation, and went down to the side of Loch Shin, and there he administered the sacrament. Some say he made use of the water of the loch, instead of wine.

ALEXANDER MACDONALD, ASSYNT

Alexander MacDonald, or Alasdair Ban, as he was locally called, lived at Lyne in the heights of Assynt. He was an elder in the time of Rev. Wm. Mackenzie.

It is said he was once fishing in a neighbouring loch, when he lost his only hook. Captain Kenneth Mackenzie, Laidbeg, and some visitors passed that way. When Captain Mackenzie, ascertained how matters stood, he was asked by one of his companions, who had no Gaelic, what had happened to the angler. On being told, the Southerner opened a pocket book, and selected a hook which he handed to the Captain saying—“Give that to the man, and tell him that it can catch even the Adversary himself.” Alasdair, who understood no English, enquired what the stranger had said, and on hearing a translation of the words, smiled and said, “O, my dear, that is the very thing I need.”

He was called to his rest about 1806, on the week in which Rev. John Kennedy came to Assynt for the first time. His funeral took place on a Saturday, and on the following day, Mr. Kennedy, before beginning his sermon in the old church at Kirkton, said—“There was one in your midst whose mortal remains you committed to the

grave near these walls yesterday, who, I am informed, used to remind you of eternity, but it is now that he could speak of the unseen world."

Alasdair was great-grandfather of the late Duncan Macrae, Free Church elder, Elphin.

ALEXANDER KERR, ASSYNT

In early youth, Alexander Kerr experienced the strivings of the Holy Spirit. Some little friction arose between him and Rev. P. Davidson, which eventually led to his becoming a staunch Separatist. It was customary, in the township where Alexander lived, that if a parent in his end of the parish desired to get baptism for his child, he went to Alexander to get his consent, before approaching the Minister. It happened that a certain man who had an infant to be baptized, called on Alexander and got his consent but a neighbour objected to the man's character, and as a result, Mr. Davidson refused to baptize the child. Alexander met the Minister soon afterwards, and asked why he refused to baptize the child. Mr. Davidson stated his objections. "If that is all," said Alexander, "You might give the man the privilege, for the man's life is quite as consistent as that of many of the parents whose children you baptize." Some time after this incident, Alexander began to keep a "Reading" in the house of his bedridden father, and eventually ceased to attend Mr. Davidson's ministry.

He had a voice of extraordinary compass, and was a powerful and popular speaker at Fellowship Meetings, but as he did not move so much from home as many of his countrymen at sacramental gatherings, he was not so widely known as some of the outstanding "men" of Assynt. He never communicated. He died towards the close of 1878.

DONALD MACLEOD, ASSYNT

Donald MacLeod, who was the last catechist of Lairg, was born in 1795. He was tall and strong, and in his younger days was one of the best precentors in the whole of the West of Sutherland. When he attended the fishing at Wick, he often precented at the meetings which for many years were conducted by Sandy Gair. Sandy was so fond of Donald's singing that before beginning, he was wont to look round and say, "Where is my piper?" Though a good man and possessing great mental ability, his gifts were not displayed to advantage in his catechetical work. The reason for this was that instead of examining the people on the Shorter Catechism exclusively, he would ask the members of the families where he held his meetings (in rotation) to repeat one question, and spent the rest of the time lecturing on the portion.

He attended the Communion at Lairg a few weeks before his death, but he was then so unwell that he did not venture out on Sabbath till shortly before the "Table" service, where he communicated for the last time. With difficulty, he faced the journey of about fifty miles to Assynt, and survived his return home only a few weeks. He died July 24th, 1874.

JOHN GUNN, ELPHIN, ASSYNT

John Gunn was the son of Robert Gunn, Achreisgill. It is said that he attended Glasgow University for at least one session. When a young man, he had occasion to be on board a vessel, which through stress of weather, had to put in to Loch Carron for shelter. It was the Communion week in that parish, and he was present on the Sabbath, when "Muckle Kate" was the only communicant at the

last Table. It is said that Mr. Lachlan's Table address was the means of his conversion.

John Gunn, Kinlochbervie (who was not of the same Gunns) heard Robert Gunn and his son John speak to the question outside at Ach-na-h-eaglais, Assynt. Some of the first speakers, among whom was his father, were, in the course of their remarks, making reference to the experience of such of the Lord's people as could recall the place and the time of their conversion. After Robert Gunn had spoken, the presiding Minister called his son John, then a comparatively young man. But as he seemed reluctant to rise, the Minister said to him—"You used to be obedient to your earthly father, and do not refuse to take part in the work of your Heavenly Father." As so many of the speakers had been referring to the experience of such as could recall the time of their saving change, John was afraid that some weak believers, who could not follow them in this, might feel discouraged. In speaking of the Lord's gracious dealings with His people, John remarked that some Christians could tell when they had undergone a saving change, while other sincere believers were unable to do so. Abraham could easily recall the day he was circumcised, whereas Isaac, who was circumcised on the eighth day, could not recollect the time when that ordinance was performed in his case, yet he bore the seal of circumcision as surely as did his father Abraham.

Robert Gunn, John's father, was a meek and Heavenly-minded Christian, and pre-eminently prayerful. A man, who as a boy, shared a bed with Robert on Communion occasions, had a very distinct recollection of how, during the night, this aged saint used to engage in prayer. His son John was an S.P.C.K. teacher in Elphin. John's son Donald for some time conducted a school in Unapool.

ALASDAIR MACLEOD, CULKEIN, STOER, ASSYNT

Alasdair MacLeod was one of the fruits of the ministry of Rev. John Kennedy, afterwards of Killearnan, to whom he was devotedly attached. One Sabbath morning, when Alasdair's family were preparing to go to Torbreck, where Mr. Kennedy was to preach, a son of Alasdair's—a young boy—fell down dead. After the remains were dressed, the father set out for Torbreck (though with a heavy heart). However, he got such uplifting of soul on the way, that after proceeding some distance, he forgot his bereavement, and so much did he enjoy of the Divine presence in the service and on the return journey, that he was oblivious to the loss of his boy until he came near his home, and saw one of the bosom companions of the deceased. This brought before his mind the death of his son for the first time since he got out of sight of his dwelling in the morning.

When Rev. John Kennedy left Assynt for Killearnan, he went by sea in a vessel which sailed from Loch Badidarach. Great numbers of the Assynt people accompanied him to the shore, where a boat was awaiting to convey him to the ship. The place became a perfect Bochim, for the people felt most keenly the wrenching from them of their beloved minister, but so much affected was Alasdair at the departure of his father in the faith, that he swooned when he saw the latter enter the boat. The worthy minister, who himself was labouring under deep emotion, on seeing Alasdair lying prostrate on the beach, ordered the boat to be pulled to shore, and leaping out, he stood beside his sorrowing convert until he revived, when he endeavoured to comfort him. At the minister's second and even third attempt to move away, he had to come ashore from the boat to comfort his devoted hearer, to whom he said—"I did not think, Alasdair, that you were so much tied to men's buttons."

Alasdair probably died before the Disruption.

MURDO MACLEOD, CULKEIN, ASSYNT

The first time that special notice had been taken of Murdo's being under concern of soul was in the house of Ian Alasdair, son of the above Alasdair MacLeod. Murdo was seen to rise, and standing behind a chair, he began to pray with the family.

When young, in the vigour of his manhood, Murdo was particularly industrious. He was an exceptionally expert mariner. He could also turn his hand very readily to any labours connected with a croft. But latterly he was unable to attend so regularly to his worldly employments, even before the infirmities of old age began to tell on him for he became subject to periodic fits of mental weakness, and was confined on four different occasions. That may account for the dislike which he had in his last years to go to sea, for it is well known that he dreaded to cross even the narrowest ferries.

He was a man of very superior talents, and was a bard of no mean order, and composed several spiritual songs, some of which possessed real poetic merit. Unfortunately, however, only one of these has appeared in print, and it is feared that the others have now been lost, though it is said that most of them were committed to writing. Few, if any, of his contemporaries in the whole of the North, except, perhaps, Alexander Kerr, could more readily arrest and rivet the attention of a congregation on the Friday of a Communion than he could. The people were always on the tiptoe of expectation to hear Murdo's name called. He was specially well equipped, physically and mentally, for public speaking. The tall, well-formed figure, the lofty brow, the intellectual face and piercing eye, which, when he warmed, flashed like fire, and the clear and musical voice at once attracted notice. His vigorous intellect imparted no ordinary elevation to his thoughts, over which

a lively imagination, threw a peculiar charm, while his extraordinary command of idiomatic Gaelic enabled him to express himself fluently in language exceptionally choice. His delivery was animated, though not vehement, and unlike the "men" of his native county, most of whom were in the habit of speaking to the question with closed eyes, he looked at the people while he addressed them, and as he warmed up, voice, hand and eye were in unison. When he enjoyed liberty, the hundreds in the congregation hung on his lips, entranced with the brilliancy of his thoughts and the beauty of his expression, for at such times he seemed to be like one scattering gems with both hands. But what made him so peculiarly acceptable to the Lord's people was the warmth of heart and the ripeness of experience from which he spoke. In a way that only few have felt, he knew what it was to be cast down and raised up again. Once in speaking at Creich on the Sacramental Friday, when an immense concourse of people sat on the slope above Loch Migdale, Murdo said—"Perhaps there is no one in this assembly of whose experience both as to bondage and liberty I am utterly ignorant." Many that were present observed that they never heard such a statement from Murdo while James Matheson, Clais-nan-cnàmh, lived.

On another occasion, he was speaking at Dingwall, and referred to a trying experience through which he had passed. He was in such distress of mind that he placed the Bible on his breast to see if that would give him relief: when that was of no avail he took a leaf out of the Bible and ate it, but that failed also, but the Lord in His mercy, brought deliverance through His Word, which He applied with power, and such was the uplifting of soul that he enjoyed, that if he had not had an opportunity that day of telling what the Lord had done for him, he remarked—"I would go this day to the hills and there declare the Divine goodness to me."

Murdo was of a most affectionate disposition, and was much attached to any in whom he believed there was "some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel." He was most sympathetic towards exercised people, and in any of the young in whom he noticed any evidence of piety, he took a deep and prayerful interest. His wife was long an invalid, being confined to bed for some years. After her death, he went to live with a sister. He was always a welcome visitor in all the houses in the district. On leaving the house of a neighbour after an evening visit, he went, as a rule, straight to the barn at his sister's dwelling, where he spent some considerable time in prayer. He often, even in his dark hours, used to admit that he thought he frequently enjoyed the Lord's presence in that barn. For the last two years of his life, he was unable to go beyond the bounds of his native parish, and was for a great part of that time confined to his house. He died in the attitude of prayer about the end of Autumn.

1881.

JAMES MACKENZIE, CATECHIST, ASSYNT

James Mackenzie, catechist of Assynt, was the son of that eminent Christian, Alasdair Mac 'Urchaidh, who, though illiterate, was an able catechist, and a noted bard. James was born in the year 1802. At a very early age, he came under deep religious impressions. When quite a young boy, his father found him one day in the "peat neuk", i.e. the corner in Highland cottages where the fuel was stored, mourning bitterly because of his sins. His pious parent, probably to test as well as to sympathize with the young penitent, said—"Poor boy, surely your transgressions have not been so many as yet."

When still a boy, he had occasion to accompany some men who had crossed by boat to Glendhu, and were

engaged at some work there. When a man called Charles Clark came to speak to the crew and gave utterance to an oath, young James at once, very respectfully, but faithfully, reprov'd Clark for the use of profane language. Clark said to one of the men—"Surely that lad is a son of Alasdair Mac 'Urchaidh for he gives evidence of having had an excellent upbringing." In his eighteenth year, he became a communicant, and during a pilgrimage of about three score and ten years, he continued to be a humble follower of the Lamb. Few, if any, of his contemporaries, bore a more striking resemblance to that picture drawn by an inspired pen man of some of the saints of old, of whom it is said that they "walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless."

He possessed good mental gifts, and though he had not the eloquence of some of the "men" of his native parish, he was a thoughtful and edifying Friday speaker. His own experience of the truths he declared, backed by a singularly consistent Christian character, lent peculiar force to his words.

When a young man, he was offered a position as Gaelic teacher, but with characteristic modesty, he declined the appointment. Shortly afterwards, he got his leg hurt, which left him lame for life. This affliction he came to look upon as a chastisement for refusing to engage in work connected with the Lord's Cause, for which a way had been opened up for him in providence.

For twenty-three years he was catechist in the extensive parish of Assynt, having succeeded the excellent Donald Mackenzie. He was most diligent and faithful in attending to his official duties. His heart was in his work, and this, along with the interesting way in which he treated the truths on which he examined the people, the judicious questions put, and his own gentle manner, made the catechizings popular and instructive. His catechetical labours, and the "readings" or prayer-meetings at which he pre-

sided, were often times of refreshing to himself and others. Once after conducting a prayer-meeting in the heights of Assynt, as he sat down in the house where he stayed during the Sabbath, he exclaimed in a kind of soliloquy—"Oh, my body is like to break, owing to what I enjoy of the love of Christ", and just as he had uttered the words, he upbraided himself for having given expression to his feelings, lest "self" should begin to boast.

James's unquestioned piety, his stainless life and his most kindly disposition endeared him to old and young. The words on his tombstone in Stoer graveyard are eminently descriptive—"A man greatly beloved."

He lived in Ach-nan-càrnan, where he finished his course on August 8th, 1889. His memory is affectionately cherished throughout the parish. His wife, who predeceased him by a few years, was a fine Christian woman. James's brother, Alexander, was well known as an eminent Christian and a useful labourer in the Lord's vineyard. His true godliness and likewise his true manliness were very evident. He was for some time a Gaelic teacher in Tanera, and then he was taken to Uig by his country-man, the Rev. Alexander MacLeod, where he did excellent work as a Catechist.

MARION MACLEOD, ELPHIN, ASSYNT

Though latterly she was better known, especially outside her native district, as *Marion* MacLeod, her proper name was Margaret, by which she was always called in her father's house and commonly by the friends of her youth. However, as the name Marion, first given her by Clark of Stronchrubie, is that by which she is now better remembered, it is here adhered to, so as to avoid ambiguity.

She was a native of Elphin, and lived there all her days. In her youth, she was regarded as a thoughtless,

giddy girl, who had a particular fondness for showy garments. But a day of saving power dawned on the careless maiden. In the house of a godly man in the district—Murdo MacLeod—a meeting was held on a Sabbath by Donald Mackenzie, the catechist, who as formerly related, had spent the preceding night and much of the early morning in earnest prayer, and had said to a friend that he expected a breach to be made on the kingdom of Satan that day. After the service had begun, Marion, clothed in a bright dress, came in. Godly Margaidh Bhan was present, and on seeing the giddy girl enter, that passage came forcibly before her mind—"O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord." The same truth occurred to the catechist, who very solemnly uttered the words aloud. Marion had only been a short time in the meeting, when she swooned and fell from her seat, and had to be carried out. She was three days in such distress of mind that she conversed with no one, and when she spoke, her first words were, "Nothing will do for me henceforth but to walk in God's presence in the light of the living."

For a considerable time, she was in great distress of mind, and though the teaching of her spiritual father, as well as the wise counsels of another Donald Mackenzie, a godly young man who was then a teacher in Elphin, proved to be helpful to her, seven years passed after her awakening, ere she was brought to the liberty of the Gospel. Once when sorely tried, she went to a Communion in Reay, purposing if she found no deliverance, to leave off attending the means of Grace. But though Marion heard the Gospel in Reay, her fetters were not removed. As the solemn work was being brought to a close on Monday, Marion, who still had no liberty, looked on her case as hopeless and gave utterance to a loud despairing cry. After the dismissal of the congregation, she returned to the house where she put up during the sacramental days. On that same Monday evening, a prayer-meeting was held in the

district, at which Sandy Gair presided. All in the house except Marion went out to the meeting. She had thrown herself on a bed, and declined to accompany the strangers and members of the household, on the ground of indisposition, though her motive was that she might run away and put an end to her life. When she was assailed by that dreadful temptation, a woman came and suggested to her that it would be well if one of them should engage in prayer. "You can do so yourself, if you care," was the curt reply. The woman prevailed on the tempted maiden to go outside. She then offered up a long prayer, at the close of which, Marion said, "There was no lack of ashes at any rate on your altar." The woman then left Marion, who prostrated herself at the back of a dyke. When she lay there, she felt someone touching her shoulder, and when she looked, she saw Sandy Gair standing beside her, who enquired whether she was the woman who cried out in soul trouble. "Oh, I cried in distress, though I fear to say it was true concern of soul," said Marion. "Poor woman," Sandy replied, "I have been looking for one like you for the last thirty years." He then quoted that passage, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Before Sandy left, Marion was so far relieved as to depart from the resolution she had been tempted to make, though her difficulties were not then entirely removed. After her visit to Reay, she heard the Communion was to be held in Kincardine, and proceeded thither. The saintly Mr. John Kennedy, Killearnan, and Dr. MacDonald, the "Apostle of the North," were the assistants. But though the very finest of the wheat was placed before the hearers, Marion felt herself shut out from the consolations of the Gospel. Towards the close of the service on Monday, Rev. Murdo Cameron, Creich, who was present as a hearer, got up in the large congregation which worshipped in the graveyard, and turning to the Ministers' tent, he said, "I trust one of the

Ministers will preach in Creich to-morrow." Sine Bhan, a godly woman who used to walk from Kincardine (Easter Ross) to Killearnan and back again on ordinary Sabbaths, sat beside Marion, and as she heard Mr. Cameron's invitation, she wished that her own special favourite, Mr. Kennedy, might undertake the service. The minister of Ferintosh rose to make the intimation, and a flush of delight brightened the countenance of Sine Bhan, as he announced that his brother, Mr. Kennedy, would conduct the service in Creich. On the Tuesday, crowds could be seen making their way to the church, and among them was Marion who accompanied her kind, godly hostess. After the preliminaries, Mr. Kennedy stated that he felt something coming between him and the text from which he intended to speak, and so saying, he closed the Bible and then opened it again, when his eye lighted on a passage. When Marion heard the Minister's statement that he would not proceed with the sermon he purposed to preach, she earnestly desired that he might be led to preach from the passage which Sandy Gair repeated when she was in fetters in Reay, and which was then before her mind. Her silent prayer was speedily answered, for Mr. Kennedy announced as the subject of his discourse, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus", and before the service was concluded, the tried young woman entered into the joy of the Gospel. To use her own expressive words—"There was one at that service who had been bound by Satan for seven years, but who was then loosed from cords with which she shall not be bound in time or eternity."

Marion was absolutely illiterate, but at the beginning of her Christian course, she derived much benefit from the visits of Donald Mackenzie, her spiritual father, when on his rounds in the heights of Assynt. When in distress of mind, she often went to Donald MacKenzie, the teacher in her native village, that he might read to her portions of

God's Word. The catechist had a great regard for this pious teacher whose home he used to call "the house of Lazarus", as its occupants, which included the school-master's mother and sister, were all God-fearing. After teaching for some years in Elphin, this excellent man removed to Inveran in Creich.

Marion was at one time without food or money in her house, but instead of going to an earthly friend for relief, she spread her case before Him Who heareth the cry of the needy. For three days, no one brought her anything, yet she was not left unprovided, for each day, she found a fresh egg on her premises, although at the time, she had no hens of her own, and so much did she enjoy of the Master's presence in her private devotions, that she felt physically quite refreshed. A good woman, a Mrs. Wilson, who lived in Ledmore, a few miles away, had, during the days that Marion's cupboard was empty, the impression that the latter was in want, for she fancied that she saw Marion pass before her whenever she had occasion to go to her meal-chest. So forcibly did this impress itself upon her mind that on the third day, she sent her daughter with meal and other provisions to Elphin. In relating her experience, afterwards, she stated to some friends that she seldom felt happier. It was in midsummer she passed through the experience just recorded. After partaking of her simple morning repast, so wonderfully provided, and engaging in private devotions, she used to go to the neighbouring moss to "lift" her peats, retiring at intervals, when she felt tired, to a burn that flowed near-by, by one of whose curves she used to spend a considerable time in prayer. In the evening, as she saw the sun sinking beyond the Western hills, she returned to her humble dwelling, so refreshed in soul, as to make her forgetful of her bodily wants.

As Marion was established in the faith, she developed into a bright, solid, judicious Christian. In company with

other worthy women from the district, she often attended the dispensation of the Lord's Supper in many of the parishes in her native county and in Ross-shire. On several occasions she was present at the great gatherings in the famous Burn of Ferintosh and in the disused quarry at Killearnan, where, in listening to the Gospel preached with such power and unction, and in enjoying the company of many that were journeying Sionward, she could exclaim in ecstasy of soul like the disciples, "It is good to be here." She often reverted in after years to one remarkable Communion Sabbath in Killearnan. An immense concourse had assembled in the open air, in the old quarry. A deep solemnity rested on the congregation, unusual liberty was granted to the Lord's honoured servants, who spoke in His name, while many of the hearers felt as if transported to the gates of Heaven. As there were many communicants present, it was necessary to have several tables. The saintly pastor, Mr. Kennedy, invited the communicants to the last table, to which they came somewhat slowly. After a considerable number had taken their places, it seemed as if there were no other intending communicants, for while several verses of a Psalm were being sung, no one was seen to come. At last, Mr. Kennedy stopped the precentor and said—"Tha m' anam 'g ionndrainn aon o' a 'bhòrd-seadh, 'is tha a t' Athair 'gad ionndrainn on a' bhòrd, sinnidh sinn rann eile" ("My soul misses one from the table, yea, and the Father misses thee from the table. We shall sing another verse.") No one, however, moved while the verse was being sung, and then the Minister touched the leader of the praise the second time, and gave another invitation, saying—"Oh anam, tha mi 'gad ionndrainn ón a' bhòrd, 's tha Dia am Mac 'g a d' ionndrainn on a' bhòrd, seinnidh sinn rann eile." ("Oh soul, I am missing thee from the table, and God the Son is missing thee. We shall sing another verse.") Still no one came forward. For the third time, the precentor was instructed to pause, when Mr.

Kennedy, in most encouraging tones, said—"O, anam, tha mi 'gad ionndrainn on a' bhòrd, 's tha Dia-ant-Athair agus Am Mac, agus an Spiorad 'g a d' ionndrainn on a' bhòrd, seinnidh sinn aon rann eile." ("Oh soul, I am missing thee from the table, and God the Father and the Son and the Spirit are missing thee. We will sing one other verse.") As that verse was being sung, three singularly handsome young lads rose near the outskirts of the congregation at the top of the high slope, and slowly and reverently made their way through the thronging multitude. They were not connected with the local congregation, and had not received tokens, but though they were strangers, the saintly pastor felt himself warranted to admit them without a formal certificate. As they were coming down to the level ground where the tables were spread, he rose in the tent, and beckoning them to approach, in his own fatherly way, he placed a token of admission in the hand of each. A sweet solemnity rested on the faces of the comely youths, which imparted to them such a Heavenly look that hundreds of eyes were fixed on them and hard were the hearts that were not affected as they moved to the table of the Lord. The appearance of the three godly lads made such an impression on Marion's mind that, although she never afterwards met them, she often expressed her firm assurance of being able to recognize them on the last day.

Marion's mind seemed to have been habitually under the influence of things unseen, but there were times when she had special uplifting of soul. On one occasion, she was staying in the house of the well-known Angus Gray, Lairg. As she did not appear at breakfast, her kind host went to enquire whether she felt unwell. She stated that it was not physical illness that kept her in bed, but in subdued tones, she informed him that she had been so feasted with the Divine love, that she hesitated to come before company, lest they might imagine that she had been

indulging in ardent spirits. In relating this incident, he used to say that her very countenance seemed to shine.

Marion's bright Christian life had a very beautiful sunset. She had a desire to depart and longed to reach the Father's house. On her last night on earth, after asking a neighbour who had come in, to read the sixty-third of Isaiah, one of her favourite chapters, she expressed her desire to depart, in the following words—"Tha fadal orm gus am bi mi coiseachd air sràidean òir an Ierusalem nuaidh, gus an faigh mi làn m' anam de' n Aran bheò a thàinig a sios o Nèamh." ("I long to tread the golden streets of the New Jerusalem that my soul may be satiated with the true bread which came down from Heaven.")

MARGARET MACLEOD, ASSYNT

Among the outstanding Christians of Assynt, the women held a very noticeable place, both as regards their numbers and their eminence. And that does not mean as one might be ready to infer, that the type of religion developed in that district was characterized by a sickly sentimentalism, for as everyone acquainted with the facts is aware, it possessed more than ordinary robustness.

The heights of Assynt could lay claim to two other eminently pious women, both bearing the name of Margaret MacLeod. Of these, the elder and probably the more widely known was Margaret MacLeod who lived in Knockan, and who went by the name of Margaidh Bhan. She was an earnest, lively and exercised Christian, and was respected not only in her native district, but privileged to enjoy the friendship of many of the outstanding worthies of the North. She travelled far to Communion services. At many of the sacramental gatherings in Sutherland and Ross, her figure, covered with a long blue cloak was a familiar and welcome sight. Her husband, Duncan MacLeod, or "Donnachadh Taillear" was a most likeable

man—meek and gentle, and a sincere and humble Christian. He was present on the memorable Friday at Lochbroom when the famous Robert MacLeod was called to speak in public for the first time. Robert on his return from the Communion, passed through Cnocan, and called at Margaidh Bhan's house with the intention of putting up there for the night. The good woman was so overjoyed at the thought of having the privilege of entertaining the one who had made such a favourable impression in Lochbroom, that she could scarcely conceal her feelings.

The visitor, afraid that his kind hostess was giving him a place of which he was unworthy, and seeing the danger to which he was exposed of being unduly elated, rose abruptly and went to look for accommodation with a neighbouring family. After passing a sleepless night, Margaidh rose at an early hour, and as she was beginning to attend to the duties of the day, who should enter but the man who had left so suddenly on the previous evening. "My good woman," said he, "get your kettle and prepare some breakfast for me." "Well, it is passing strange" was her reply, "that you should come to me for your morning meal, after having bolted away in such an unaccountable manner. Surely you were properly entertained where you put up." "My good friend," he answered, "I left last night, not because I expected better entertainment elsewhere, but because you seemed to be giving too high a place to the creature, and I quitted the house where I stayed last night because its occupants gave so low a place to the Creator. There was no appearance of the fear of God in the family, and so I was glad to get away with all possible haste." The visitor having partaken of some food and having engaged in family worship, set out for home. Margaidh accompanied him, but as she had not any intention, when leaving the house to go but a very short distance, probably to direct the stranger to the best track (for there were no roads), she was dressed only in

her everyday working clothes. However, as they proceeded, they began to speak of "the things of the Spirit of God", and so much did they become absorbed in their subject that they seemed to have become unconscious of their progress till they had ascended the ridge in sight of Unapool—a distance of close on a dozen miles, where they parted. Before doing so, Margaidh complained of the opposition of the world. "That no doubt may be trying," remarked her friend, "but you will feel it even more poignant to endure the frowns of the church." His words proved to be prophetic. This worthy woman was too ardent a follower of the Captain of Salvation to escape the assaults of the Adversary, who stirred up some individuals to give utterance to certain slanderous statements concerning her, and a few professing Christians gave too much heed to such gossip. The cloud was soon dispersed, and her character completely vindicated. The parties that had spread the report came to her when on her death-bed to confess their sin and to express their sorrow, and the dying saint, actuated by the Spirit of the Master, freely forgave them.

Margaidh had no little influence for good in the district where she lived. Exercised persons sought her company, while the careless "walked softly" in her presence. She entered on her everlasting rest a few years after the Disruption. Her worthy husband survived her for some time.

Another godly Margaret of Assynt lived in Elphin, and was known in her native place as "Margaidh Nighean Aonghais 'ic 'Urchaidh". She was a sincere, prayerful and humble Christian, and though not quite so well known beyond the bounds of her own parish as some of her pious neighbours, yet she never failed, in her own unassuming way to carry about with her the fragrance of her Master's name.

In her last illness, she sent for her attached friend, Marion MacLeod, to whom she said, "Notwithstanding all

the privileges I ever enjoyed. I never felt myself so utterly empty as I do now." To this the other replied, "It is a good thing that it is not to your purse full of holes that the Most High has committed His treasure." The remark was to her a word in season. Her latter end was peace—as she was passing away, Marion, who was in the room, thought she saw a bright light glide three times over the pallid face of the dying saint. Her death took place about the year 1862. Her husband was Angus MacLeod, who was said to have been a careless man.

ISABEL KERR

Isabel was the wife of Cathel Kerr in Clashnessie, and was a lively and exercised Christian. She was awakened under the teaching of Donald Mackenzie, the catechist. In the course of time, she became a follower of Alexander Kerr, but eventually returned to the Free Church. Alexander Kerr once came to Drumbeg on a Sabbath morning to hold a meeting. His breakfast before leaving home was a little milk and some oatmeal. He came early, and sat on a hillock, but saw none of the local people going to Drumbeg where he purposed to hold his meeting, as they were not aware that he had come. Instead, they were passing on to the neighbouring town of Culkein, where Donald Mackenzie the catechist was conducting a meeting. Alexander Kerr attended the meeting and on his way home, kept a meeting in Clashnessie in the house of Isabel, and then left abruptly. Isabel followed him to bring him back for food. She overtook him, and walked beside him until they reached Torbreac Brac, without either of them speaking a word (seemingly they were both so much under the influence of Divine things). At last Alexander broke the silence by asking her whither she was going. "I really do not know" was her reply.

George Sheumais, Melness, was once on a visit to Ian Og, Drumbeg, and called on his way at Clashnessie to see Isabel, who accompanied him. The time passed so pleasantly with Ian, who was long bed-ridden, that she prevailed on to remain all night in his house. Next day, George returned with her to Clashnessie. When she reached her house, she found the door locked, for her husband was out doing spring work. However she got an entrance through a window, but she was afraid her husband might be displeased with her for her absence. But when he appeared and heard from his wife of their experience at Drumbeg, he was delighted, and very specially, that he was to be privileged with the company of such a man as George, that he proposed to have a special meal, and presented him with a new white shirt.

Isabel communicated on the last sacramental Sabbath that Dr. Kennedy had preached in Stoer, about 1879 or 1880.

CHRISTIAN MACKENZIE, ACHNANCARNAN

Christian MacLeod, or as she was commonly called "Carstian In' Nanhais", was the wife of George Mackenzie, Achnancarnan, Stoer. She was an eminently godly woman, who had much of the secret of the Lord. She had a daughter in America. One day, she told that her daughter had been called away. Sometime afterwards, a letter brought the news that she had passed away on the very day stated by her mother.

Christian's mother, who probably came from the East Coast of Sutherland, was an earnest believer, whose desire after the sincere milk of the Word was such as to lead her to make periodic journeys to many of the great Communion gatherings, such as Killearnan and Ferintosh. She was a thoroughly guileless character and, though on the

roll of the worldly-wise, she could not lay claim to a high place, yet there were occasions when her honest simplicity served her in good stead as the following incident shows. At one time on her return from the Communion at Killearnan, she had occasion, along with some fellow travellers, to pass through Tain. In those days, it was customary for elderly women to wear large muslin kerchiefs above their snow white caps, and seeing a draper's shop, the good woman entered with the intention of purchasing a muslin square. On being informed that the price was ninepence, she looked rather disappointed and said, "Oh, then, I cannot buy it, for I have only a shilling." "Are you joking?" said the shopkeeper. "Oh, no, I'm sorry, I have only one shilling." The draper folded the muslin, and said—"Well, my honest woman, since you have got through life hitherto in such a way, I am not to take advantage of you, and as it is seldom I do business with one like you, I have great pleasure in making you a present of this kerchief."

FOOTNOTE TO ASSYNT

About the middle of the eighteenth century, there were only a few Bibles in the whole of Assynt, and very few who were able to read them. In Clashnessie, there was only one copy of the Scriptures. On one occasion, the man who owned this copy and who could read it, went with a few more men to fish near Loch Laxford, in the Reay country. He took his Bible with him. When they reached Laxford, they went to a house near the shore, in which they stayed for the night, and left early in the morning. In those days, there were not many boats, with sails, but large skiffs propelled by about half a dozen oars. Not far from the place where the men had put up during the night, they came to a certain point, and row as they might, they did not appear to be making any progress. At length the owner of the Bible looked in the boat for the precious

volume, but could not see it, so it occurred to him that he must have left it in the house where they took shelter. Accordingly, they rowed back, and found the Bible, and soon reached again the place where they had been becalmed a little before, but they had no difficulty rounding the point and in reaching their homes.

CHAPTER X

PARISH OF EDDRACHAOLIS

ROBERT MACLEOD, SCOURIE

ROBERT MACLEOD belonged to the Kyle-Strome district. In his youth, he was indifferent to religion. Once when the Communion services were held in the parish, instead of attending public worship, on one of the week days he spent the time working at a meal mill in the district. A good man met him and reproved him for his carelessness. "You," said the man "seem to be worse than Satan, for when the sons of Job went to the feast, we read that Satan appeared among them, but now, when the Gospel feast is spread in this parish, you do not go to the trouble of attending it." The words fell on Robert like a thunder clap, and proved to be the means of bringing him under concern of soul.

When the heartless evictors cleared Kyle-Strome of its crofters and turned their township into a sheep run, he went to live at Geisgill. Robert's mother, who was locally known as Barbara Ruairidh, was distinguished for her sincere piety. She said that of her seven children, she had good hopes of at least six. From Geisgill, Robert was again removed, and came to live at Tarbet, Loch Laxford, but he remained here only for a short period. His wife was rather a worldly woman, and when at Tarbet, she insisted on his remaining at home to sow the corn on one of the Communion days in a neighbouring parish. He did so, but said—"I don't believe there will be much crop in that rig." Scarcely a blade of corn grew in that part of the croft.

It is said that he went all the way to the parish of Tongue to see the godly Donald MacPherson, when in some trouble, in the hope that the venerable saint might deal faithfully with him, and tell what he thought of his case. Donald received the stranger kindly, but at first did not ask him even to ask a blessing at meals. When the time for family worship came round, the host took the preliminary parts, and then turning round to the stranger, he asked him to conclude with prayer. Robert at first declined, but the other was insistent. After getting down on his knees and addressing his Creator, he said, "Thou knowest I am more afraid of Donald MacPherson than of Thyself." On hearing this, his host tapped him gently on the shoulder and said, "You have begun honestly, and will end honourably" and then concluded the prayer himself. When Donald was accompanying Robert on his way home, he encouragingly said to him, "As a sign that a life of public usefulness is before you, within three years hence, you shall be called three times in public on the same day." Ere the stated time had transpired, the Communion was held in Loch Broom. On the Friday, Mr. Lachlan MacKenzie, who presided, stated that he expected to have an important addition to the speakers that day. As the people sat out in the open air beside Clachan, many eyes were from time to time turned in the hope of catching a glimpse of the looked-for recruit. After a few of the "men" had been called, Robert, with a grey plaid wrapped around his shoulders, made his appearance, and took his place on the outskirts of the congregation. He had not been long seated when Mr. Lachlan, turning his face and pointing to him, said, "Stranger with the grey plaid on the edge of the congregation, rise, and speak to the question." Robert did so, but being taken by surprise, he felt embarrassed and only made a few remarks and sat down. Before the close of the meeting, Mr. Lachlan said, "Stranger with the grey plaid, you spoke at a disadvantage before, as

you were called without an opportunity of hearing much of what had been said by others, but rise now, and the liberty which you formerly lacked shall now be given you." Mr. Lachlan was so delighted with Robert's remarks that after the question had been closed, he asked the stranger to engage in prayer. Thus the words of good Donald MacPherson were fulfilled to the letter.

The following incident is given of Robert. At a Communion in Badcall, there was a large number of visitors, to whom every kindness was shown by the local people. At a prayer-meeting on Monday morning, Robert was called to engage in prayer and one of his petitions, when asking that the people might be rewarded for their hospitality, was—"Reward them for their kindness, and in the case of such as may not have patience to wait for Thy reward, pay them in ready money." ("Pàigh iad le airgid laimh.") That evening, for it was mid-summer, several boats put to sea, and they had exceptionally large catches.

When in Geisgill, one day he was resting himself by the wayside, when that arch-evictor, Charles Clark, happened to pass the way, who accosted the good man thus—"I am sure you are angry at me for having removed you." "No," said Robert, "but I am displeased with myself for my sins, for which the Lord is chastising me. But you take heed, for you are the chastening rod, and when it does its work, the Creator may break it and cast it into the fire."

Once in the spring-time, Robert was engaged digging a corner of his croft with a Highland spade, or "caschrom", and when he had finished, he said, "That piece of land shall never be cultivated again till a child of the covenant comes and does so." Next year, he was removed to Tarbet where he remained only for a short time. He then came to Badcall.

After he had come to be known as one of the most original and acceptable "Friday" speakers in the North,

two Christian friends from Caithness paid him a visit. He was grieved that he had scarcely any food to set before them. The worthy man brought his cares before the Giver of all good. In his earnestness, he must have expressed himself audibly, for during the night, the visitors thought they heard some conversation going on, and later on, enquired of their host what it was about. "Oh that was a dialogue between Pride and Poverty", he replied. In the early morning, he went to the shore to gather shell-fish for breakfast, and while doing so, saw a vessel enter the bay and from it there landed a young man laden with parcels. This was Robert's son who was one of the ship's crew, and was on a visit to his father. He brought with him provision enough for entertaining the visitors and supplying the household for many days.

Robert and Donald MacPherson were once together, when one asked the other would there be a return of the Divine power? Donald, as seemingly the older, replied, "When that takes place, every man will be smiting not his neighbour's but his own breast."

He ended his pilgrimage in Badcall, early in the third decade of the nineteenth century. He is buried in the graveyard at Scourie.

GEORGE MACKAY, ROSTER

George Mackay, Roster, was a brother of Neil Mackay, Scourie-more. They belonged to Kyle-Strome. George was once perplexed about the existence of Satan. He happened to call at a house where Andrew Ross, Tongue, was visiting. While sitting at food, Andrew was requested to ask a blessing, and without hearing anything about George's state of mind, he began by saying—"There may be some that are troubled with the question, 'Who is Satan?' but they need not go from their own hearts to

know something of his malignity." These words brought instant relief to George's mind. George possessed poetic gifts, of which he made use in composing elegies on faithful witnesses and also in denouncing unfaithful ministers. His brother, Neil, was charitable towards those with whom he differed, though he had not the keen discernment of George. Unlike many of the outstanding "men" in the parish, he did not go the length of absenting himself from attending church in the dark days of moderatism, prior to the Disruption.

In those days, the famous John Mackenzie, Scourie, kept a meeting which was largely attended, and he used to denounce in no measured terms, the faults of the church, and to warn against the unsound doctrine often preached in her pulpits, and discouraged the people from attending the services conducted by the local minister. This godly man who became blind in his latter years, was born in Kyle-Strome. He entered his rest in 1878, aged 87 years.

Neil Mackay, although dissatisfied himself, was in the habit of attending the church. His son Murdo, was for many years elder and precentor in Kinlochbervie Free Church. He was a simple, guileless man who had a great dread of controversy.

DONALD ROSS, SCOURIE

Donald Ross, Scourie village, was a beautiful Christian character who apparently feared the Lord from his youth. When a young man, he was forced to leave home to join the army, but after reaching Fort George, he was allowed to return. On that occasion, he heard Dr. MacDonald preach in Dingwall, and the great preacher's fervent appeals he could never forget. Alexander Ross, Foindle, Loch Laxford, elder in the Free Church and a cousin of Donald Ross, was another grandson. As a Friday speaker,

he was better remembered for his strong testimony against the innovations in worship and errors of the day than for any original thought. On one occasion, Donald Ross, Scourie, was working at peats in Reay Forest, near the road, and on the week of the Rogart Communion, he saw John Mackenzie and John Gunn pass on the mail-coach on their way to the services. The thought occurred to him—"These men are putting themselves to trouble for the good of their souls, and surely my soul is as needful as theirs of the blessing which they seek after", and so he resolved to attend the sacrament. His work allowed him to go away when he liked, and so he returned home to Scourie, a distance of fourteen miles, for a change of clothing. Travelling during the night, for it was the middle of July, he reached Rogart—a distance of over fifty miles, walking practically all the way—in time for the Fellowship meeting. He was never in the place before, and was not known to the people, and his modesty made him shrink from making any attempt to look for a house to stay in, so he remained outside all that night. He had a piece of oatcake in his pocket which, with a drink out of a spring near the place of meeting, sustained him. At the dead of night, he rested in the preaching tent. He spent the night of Friday and Saturday in this fashion, and on Sabbath evening after the service of the day, he retired to the spring of water, intending to spend that night also outside. He was observed by a shepherd, who was on his way home about three-quarters of a mile from the place of meeting, and knowing he was a stranger, he took him to his own house. Dr. Mackay, Inverness, assisted at that Communion, and preached a sermon on "For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost", which to Donald proved to be a feast full of marrow.

PEGGY MACDIARMID

Peggy MacDiarmid belonged to Argyllshire where her father had a fairly large farm. She had nine sisters and two brothers—one of whom was an officer in the army. His name was Duncan, and it is worthy of notice how he was converted. Peggy was on one occasion, along with her maid, going to see one of her sisters, Mrs. Campbell, who lived in Edinburgh. Duncan was stationed there, and had not for a long time seen Peggy. She, however, called at his house, and on being asked what they wanted, her maid being with her, Peggy realized that her brother did not recognize her, and purposely, so as not to make herself known, she said that they had come to his house to rest by the way. They were told that they could not stay for the night, so they took their departure. A day or two afterwards, Duncan was invited to a dinner party at the house of his sister, Mrs. Campbell, where he met Peggy. He embraced her warmly when Peggy, in her own effective way, said:—"You show me much affection in presence of these strangers, but what if my expulsion from your house will shut you out of Heaven. 'I was a stranger and ye took me not in'." It was then that he realized that it was to his sister he had refused hospitality a few days before. Such was the effect of this occurrence upon his mind that it was the means of awakening him, and it was said that he soon afterwards turned out to be a bright and useful Christian.

Peggy came to Sutherland along with her brother Colin, who had a farm at Glendhu, Assynt. It was while she was there that she made the acquaintance of Donald Mackay who had a farm at Borley, Durness. Her brother, while deer-stalking, was drowned in Loch Stack, and Peggy was heart-broken. She returned to Argyll, not, however, as she had left it, for her brother's death was the means of

awakening her to a sense of sin and her need of being prepared for eternity.

Shortly after this, she was married to Mackay, and thus came to Sutherland a second time, where she lived the rest of her beautiful and useful life, "A life of faith upon the Son of God, Who loved her and gave Himself for her." They lived for a time in Shigra, near Kinlochbervie, but had to give up the farm and live at Achninver along with their daughter Minnie, whose husband was then sole tenant of that township. The son-in-law gave them half the land, and when the Duchess of Sutherland came to know of their circumstances, she gave them half of the land of Achninver rent free as long as they lived.

Peggy was once returning from a Communion accompanied by George Munro, Marcus his brother and Robert Murray—all of Farr. When coming across the Moin, they came to a path that would take them to her home. The men had a longer distance to go by turning aside to Achninver than to continue their journey directly to the Ferry. Peggy invited them to her house. George was not disposed to accept the invitation, as he had some work to do. The others were willing to go. "You can proceed and shall reach your house safely, but the others shall be home before you," Mrs. Mackay said to George. Humanly speaking, this seemed very unlikely, but it proved to be true. After partaking of some food and resting for some time, the kind hostess said to her two grandsons, then mere boys, to go with the men to a place about two miles from the house and show them a boat which would bring them to the mouth of the river Naver. When they reached the place indicated, there was a boat from Farr which had been in Melness for flag stones, and was ready to sail. Peggy knew nothing of the arrangement for conveying the flag stones when she invited the men. George had to walk all the way, a very long distance.

A son of Rev. David Mackay, Farr, then a student for

the ministry, had a desire to see Peggy, who at that time was laid aside. During the day, Peggy called her grandson and said to him, "There is a gentleman that I expect to see this evening, and we have everything suitable for the entertainment of one in his position except light, and you go down to the shore and there you shall find some candles." When the boy reached the sands, he found a parcel of wax candles.

On one occasion, Peggy was at the Communion at Ferintosh, along with two eminently pious women, Marion MacLeod and Margaret Bàn, belonging to Assynt, where they enjoyed a "feast of fat things." On one of the weekdays, probably Friday, they heard that Mr. Kennedy, Killearnan, their favourite preacher, under whose ministrations their souls were so often fed with the marrow of the Gospel, was to conduct an evening service in his own church. They were overjoyed, and at the close of the service in the Burn, Peggy stated that she was resolved to accompany her friends to Killearnan, but that she would have to tell Dr. MacDonald, as she was his guest. When she told him her purpose, he requested her to accompany him to the Manse, and that he would send her across in his conveyance, as it would be too much for her to walk. "I am quite able to go on foot," was her quick response, "for my soul has been so lifted up under the Gospel that I feel my body to be as light as a band box."

She was usually called "the woman of great faith." A minister who was introduced to her for the first time, exclaimed, "The woman of great faith." "No, no," she quickly replied, "but the woman of small faith in the Great God."

She passed to her everlasting rest in April, 1841.

CHAPTER XI

PARISH OF TONGUE

ANDREW ROSS, TONGUE

ANDREW ROSS, catechist, Tongue, a native of Nigg, Ross-shire, was a blacksmith to trade. His modesty made him very reluctant at first to accept office in the church, but one day as he was thinking over the matter, that Scripture, "Na'm biodh iad so nan tosd ghlaodhadh na clachan" ("If these held their peace, the stones would cry out,")—came with such power before his mind that he felt he could no longer decline. There was an excellent woman in Dingwall who remembered, when she was a very young girl, seeing Andrew and some other pious men in her father's house, where they stayed for a few days. There was a bush not far from the house, to which Andrew used to retire for his private devotions, and often in the course of the day did she hear a low chant issuing from the bush as the saintly man poured out his heart before his Maker.

Andrew had a free house from the Sutherland family. His son William gave no outward evidence of piety while his father lived. On the death of his worthy father, he went to the local factor, Mr. Horsburgh, to see on what terms he would be permitted to occupy the dwelling. In the course of conversation, the factor said to William, "Many a prayer has been offered in the house, and it is time for you, William, to begin to pray." Before the end of a year, William might be seen among the rocks praying for mercy. He became a bright and burning light, and

was a powerful and impressive speaker at Fellowship meetings. He was an elder in the Free Church of Tongue, but was not left long in the church on earth.

ALEXANDER MACKAY, TONGUE

Andrew Ross was succeeded in office by Angus Mackay, and after him came another worthy man, Alexander Mackay, better known as Alasdair Beag. He was born in 1801 and died in 1883. He was the last catechist in Tongue. Alasdair was the son of a widow who lived at Modsary. In his youth, he had a craze for dancing. On one occasion, when he was about eighteen years of age, he was invited to join a wedding party from Eilean an Ròin. The marriage ceremony took place in Tongue, after which he crossed over with the newly married couple to the island. After an ample repast and a liberal supply of whisky, the young people proceeded to a dance and young Sandy took a very prominent part. Indeed, so keen was he to be as free as possible on the floor that he removed his shoes. After continuing for some time, he thought he heard a voice saying to him, "Alasdair, stad" ("Alexander, cease"). But he still continued to take part in what he then enjoyed so much, until he felt as if an intolerable burden was weighing him down. At last, he became so oppressed that he could not move. Though urged to continue the dance, and to help himself to more of the intoxicating beverages, he felt himself so overburdened that he had to be assisted by some of his companions to bed, but it was not to sleep. In the early morning, he attempted to rise and with the help of some of the young men, he was taken to a boat which ferried him across to a spot as near as possible to his home. When he was brought inside, he hid himself underneath his bed. For fifteen months, he passed through great distress of soul,

and during that time, he seldom could be prevailed upon to sleep except under his bed. When under conviction of sin, he was so oppressed by a sense of guilt and unworthiness that when he went to church, he generally lay under the pews. After being brought to Gospel liberty, he became a most capable worker on sea and land and developed into a most attractive Christian.

In his later years, he was looked up to as one of the most outstanding "men" of the parish. He was an exceedingly humble and lovable man who had great influence with old and young. He was once delving a piece of ground along with another, whom he soon outstripped. "You beat me," said the other. "If so," was the reply, "I have dearly paid for it, for I was half an hour without a thought of my soul."

The tombstone on his grave in Skerray which was erected by his many admirers and friends in the congregation, states that he was "an Israelite indeed in whom there was no guile." He was "always pleasant and profitable in the society of his numerous Christian friends and was ever found wise and able and useful when engaged in the solemn duties of his office."

WILLIAM MACKAY, TONGUE

William Mackay, an eminently godly man, lived in Diarachdcory, near Cnoc Stanc. He came one Sabbath to the church of Tongue on a day of drift and snow, during the ministry of old "Mr. William", a distance of about sixteen miles, and there was no road at that time. After the close of the service, the Minister asked him why he had ventured out on such a stormy day, when only people in the near neighbourhood were at the service. In reply, he stated that there were three things that moved him to attend the house of God: 1st—The Lord had given him

strength and he considered it his duty to wait on Him in public worship. 2nd—He came to add to the number in the congregation and thus encourage the minister when he knew that many would absent themselves. 3rd—He came so that if the Spirit of God should be moving in the church that day, He might not find his pew empty.

CHAPTER XII

PARISH OF FARR

JOHN MACINTOSH, FARR

JOHN MACINTOSH, catechist, Farr, was born in Kyle-Strome. For a time, he was sorely tried by one of the old "Moderates"—a North country Minister, and when in the Inverness district, he called on Wm. Fraser, Tomnahurich, to whom he made known his grievance. William told him not to trouble himself, for he would soon be relieved of that particular thorn. "You can go home John, I have a strong feeling that the first news you hear will be the death of that man." When John returned home, it was late, and as he was tired with the journey, he did not rise particularly early. Before John had got up some of the neighbours had come in and said to one of the family, "Have you heard that Mr. so-and-so is dead?" John overheard the conversation, so that William's words were true to the letter.

At a Communion in Farr after John MacIntosh had been confined to bed, some godly ministers assisted Mr. David MacKenzie. On one of the days, the minister who preached the outside service had unusual liberty. Some of the good people who stayed in his house on their return from the service, were surprised to find that John was able to give the text, and also to point out the manner in which the preacher had treated it, though they were the first of the hearers that John had seen that day.

**WILLIAM MACKAY, CATECHIST, FARR,
AND CHRISTY MACKAY**

William Mackay, Achana, was an exceedingly meek and humble Christian whose holy life was a constant rebuke to sin, and whose gentle and winning manners gave him a warm place in the affections of the people. He must have been no ordinary man, when he was chosen to be catechist of Farr at a time when there were to be found within the bounds of that parish, including Strathnaver, some of the most outstanding of the men of the Highlands.

All classes held him in the highest regard. The manager of the salmon-fishing at the mouth of the Naver made it a rule to give the first fish of the year as a present to the worthy catechist. On one occasion, when the fishers had made a start, they landed two salmon in their first catch, and so it was resolved to send the two fishes to William. The pious man began to tremble before the Lord and His loving kindness, and afraid lest he should have all his good things in this life, said to his wife, "I fear I am not right when I have got so many fish." His excellent partner whose faith was more buoyant, and who was naturally of a more cheerful disposition, replied—"Indeed, if the number of salmon one gets should be a cause of uneasiness, what reason the fishers themselves have to be afraid, considering all they get." His wife, Christy Mackay, who long survived him, was a "Mother in Israel". When comparatively young, she was awakened and was for some time in distress of mind. In her anxious state, she found much help in the sympathy and wise advice of the well-known Adam Mackay (Bain). On one occasion, her father, who was of a rather hasty temper, happened to enquire where young Christian had gone to. His wife replied that she was probably conversing with Adam Bain

as they had matters of their own in which they were interested. "Dear me," exclaimed the impatient father, "these matters of theirs never seem to come to an end."

It is of this Adam Bain that it is related that he was once met near Bettyhill by a Mackenzie who leased the salmon fishing at Invernaver. The latter took him in for a refreshment. After they had been served, Adam put down a shilling on the table in payment of what they had taken. Mackenzie, however, insisted on paying the bill, saying to Adam, "It was I who took you in; keep your shilling. I have more money than you." "That may be so," said Adam, "but in the end I shall leave as much money as you." "How can you do that, seeing you are now advanced in years and so near the end of your journey?" "Oh well," said the other, "I shall leave the world with all it contains and so must you." On hearing this, Mackenzie was so pleased that he went to a tailor and gave Adam a new suit.

William Achana was once at a prayer-meeting where he was asked to take part, and got great freedom in approaching the Mercy-seat. His godly wife was present and when the people had come out, one who was struck with William's fervency, asked her whether she took notice of her husband's words. "Oh, no," was the reply, "for when he was engaged, I was praying at the time that the Most High would deal bountifully with him." She was not only esteemed in her native district, but she enjoyed in no ordinary degree, the friendship of the evangelical ministers of Sutherland and Caithness.

At the time of the "Clearances", the factor told her that she would have to leave her croft. She replied that she was not removing, as she had a life-rent of the place. "Indeed, woman," he asked in surprise, "who could have given you such a lease?" "I have got it," she answered, "from my Heavenly Father." Turning round to some man who was present, he said, "The woman is surely talking

nonsense." "No," the other replied, "for she would not have spoken in such a way without good ground and you will be well advised not to disturb her." The result was that the good woman was allowed to remain. She, being one "that feared God and eschewed evil", it is not surprising that the tempter should try to molest her. A pious, intelligent and level-headed man, whose veracity is beyond dispute, has told the writer that he was once, when a youth, in Achana at family worship in the morning. The worthy woman was on her knees, leading the devotions, and seemingly enjoying great liberty, when an extraordinary noise was heard at the outer door of the cottage, as if a large stone had been hurled with terrific force against the door. A young lad who was inside, got up quietly and quickly rushed out, expecting to find the boards in splinters, but, strange to relate, the door, which was shut, was not only absolutely intact, but showed not the slightest signs of having been interfered with. The house was so situated that one could be seen for a distance after leaving it, no matter which way one turned. But though the young man that went outside looked all round, no one was to be seen. To show how this saintly woman was revered, it is said that the marriage of a young couple in the neighbourhood was arranged to take place on the week of her death, but out of respect for her memory, the ceremony was postponed for some little time.

This worthy couple had a daughter named Beathag, who was one of the "excellent of the earth." Once the local factor was at a market at Bettyhill, and had a "dig" at professing Christians, remarking that they did not carry their religion into their worldly transactions. At the time, Beathag passed with a calf which she wished to sell, and the factor, ascertaining that she made a public profession and with a view to testing her honesty, enquired how much she demanded for her beast. She replied, "My price is fifteen shillings, though perhaps it is hardly worth so

much." He was so struck with her conscientiousness that he gave her twenty shillings for the calf.

William Mackay entered on his everlasting rest on the 30th May, 1821. The first letter of his age as recorded on his tombstone has become obliterated, but the second figure—8—can still be traced. Some of the old people are under the impression that his age was 68. The name of his wife, "Christy Achana", as she was familiarly called, is still fragrant in all the Northern parishes of Sutherland. She was removed to the "Father's House" on the 5th February, 1839, at the age of 77 years.

SINEAG NIC 'URCHAIDH

A WAVE of spiritual life had passed over Strathnaver about the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, which left its mark in a very noticeable way during the great revival there under the ministry of Mr. John Balfour about the middle of the eighteenth century.

In Strathnaver, as in many districts in the North, it was customary to have private prayer-meetings on Saturday at noon, which were open for communicants and other persons who were encouraged to attend by the leaders of the meeting. Many of the children and young people were so impressed that when they saw their seniors repair to the meetings, which they, according to the custom, were not expected to attend, they began to hold meetings of their own. These young people were not "playing" at meetings, but were earnestly seeking the Lord.

Murdo MacDonald, Baile-gill, who was church officer for a long time in Strathy Free Church, was a native of Strathnaver, and he was one, who as a boy attended such meetings. He was married to a sister of Donald Gunn, the catechist. He had an eminently godly aunt, Sineag nic

'Urchaidh, who after the evictions, lived in the hamlet of Baligill. She was singularly pious, and was well known for her fervent prayers.

There was a godly youth in the district who used to say that he could look at twenty dead men without shedding a tear, but he could scarcely ever hear this woman or Donald Dalangall in prayer without weeping copiously. She was once heard at her devotions use the following words—"Tha mi cho dubh ris an t-satan, ach cò th' agam anns na nèamhaibh shuas ach thusa Dhia nan dùl." ("I am as black as Satan but whom have I in the Heavens high but Thee O Lord alone.")

IAN MACIAN, SKAIL, STRATHNAVER

Ian (MacIan), Skail, was converted at a catechizing, at which, when he was a boy, he was sitting on a peat. This differs from what is stated in the "Memoir of Rev. John MacDonald, Helmsdale", where it is said he was converted at Clyne at the time of a Communion. But the truth may be that he received his first deep serious impressions and saving impressions too, at the catechizing, and that these were deepened at Clyne, and possibly he may have there been brought to the liberty of the Gospel.

John at one time had a dark grey mare (*làir chior*) which had got lost. His wife who was regarded as rather worldly-minded said to her husband—"You must go to look for the mare", but John seemingly dismissed the matter by replying, "Oh I believe the mare will turn up." "Oh," said his wife, "what good will your faith do for the lost animal?" The good wife became so urgent that John considered it prudent to go outside. But instead of enquiring for the mare, he retired to some quiet spot, where he spent some time in prayer, and in reading a book which he carried in his pocket. He returned home in the evening

without having seen trace of the missing beast. About a fortnight had gone and the time had now come for removing the peats from the moor to the house, and when the pony was absolutely necessary for dragging the peat sledges or wicker work carts. Just then, a message came from Tongue to Strathnaver to the effect that a grey mare had been found straying on the grazing of a certain man, who demanded payment for her keep, but it was added that if the lost animal belonged to John MacIain, no mouey was to be demanded. When the mare was brought back to John's door, fat and sleek, just when needed for the peat-carrying, he called his wife and said, "Come, see the fine condition in which Faith has sent back the mare."

WILLIAM MACKAY, SYRE, STRATHNAVER

In his youth, William was a lover of pleasure, and had a special liking for dancing. His first wife—for he was twice married—was an eminently godly woman. It was after her marriage she discovered that her husband was so much carried away by the vanities of this world, and she was deeply grieved to notice his indifference to spiritual things, for at first, he even neglected to conduct family worship. Many a sleepless night did this good woman spend on account of her husband's unconcern for his soul's interest: indeed it is said her pillow was often wet with her tears.

On one occasion, William received an invitation to a dance, and not caring to leave his young wife at home, he insisted that she would accompany him. At last she agreed to go on the express condition that he would engage in the worship of God in his house. He was so keen to join in the dance that he was ready to make any promise and consented to the conditions imposed by his wife. Accord-

ingly, they both set out for the house of mirth, but with very different feelings, for the husband was full of excitement in anticipation of the pleasure he expected in the ball-room, while his pious wife was lifting up her heart to God in prayer that her husband might be turned from the error of his ways. They had not proceeded far when William began to reflect on the promise he had given, and he felt how utterly unfit he was to fulfil it. The thought of conducting family worship haunted him all the way, notwithstanding his attempts to banish it from his mind.

Nor did the music and the dance remove the heavy burden which weighed him down : and at last, he felt so oppressed under a sense of sin that, unable to remain any longer with the dancers, he turned to his wife and said, "Come let us go home at once." The shouting and empty laughter of the ball-room were that night exchanged for groans and sobs, and the good work then begun was so marked that, not many years afterwards, this leader of the dance often led in district prayer-meetings. His conviction of sin was indeed unusually deep for some time, but, when brought to the liberty of the Gospel, he, like the Ethiopian eunuch, went on his way rejoicing, for his Christian course, though comparatively brief, was unusually bright.

William was the first of the race of catechists from the North that laboured in Strathdearn. After the saintly Mr. Hugh Mackay had been settled in Moy, he began to look out for a catechist, and he was not long in making choice of his countryman at Syre, for though William was then only a little over 40 years of age, his rare gifts and grace and deep experience marked him out as one peculiarly fitted for such a responsible office.

Soon after William had begun his labours in Strathdearn, he held a diet of catechizing in a township of the district, called the Streens. He had never been there before, and did not know the people. Among those cate-

chized on that occasion was one who was asked to repeat the answer to that question in the Shorter Catechism "What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the resurrection?" The man proceeded to give the answer correctly, and when he came to the word "acquitted", the catechist looked at him and with much feeling said, "Yes believers shall be acquitted in the day of Judgment; but some of them shall not be FULLY acquitted till then, and blessed John Graham will not till then be fully acquitted from the false charges which you and others were circulating about him." At the close of the meeting, someone asked William whether he had known the man to whom he had spoken about Mr. Graham. "No," was the reply. "I have never met him before." "Well," he was told, "that man was one of John Graham's greatest persecutors."

On one occasion, William was travelling to Moy, and at Invergordon Ferry, he saw Hugh Buie. He knew Hugh but Hugh did not know him. They were travelling to Kessock, and as William wished to tease Hugh, he feigned to entertain Arminian views. This set Hugh into a fury. When they came to Kessock, William said, "We shall go in and have something to eat." He then told Hugh to ask a blessing. Hugh said, "As you are such a good man, you had better do so yourself." When William had concluded, Hugh got up and embraced him. "You rascal," he said, "you have deceived me—you appeared to be a great Arminian, but when you prayed, you appeared as though you were as great a sinner as Hugh Buie."

Once, a man in Tongue heard that William was not well, and came to see him. He stayed a night with William and spent part of the time counting the men in Strathnaver who could be called on a Friday to speak to the question, and found seventy, and there were three times as many women as that whom they believed to be God-fearing.

William Mackay passed to rest in 1798, aged 48 years, and was buried in the churchyard of Farr.

JANE MACKAY, ARMADALE

Jane Mackay lived in Armadale, in what is now the parish of Strathy. Her first husband was a soldier, and a pious man. On one occasion, he was hurried away so quickly that he left without some of his clothes. She went after him to Fort George with some stockings and shirts. She parted with him there, under the impression that they were never to meet again in this world. She never saw him again. His death, when she was very young, was the means of awakening her, and after severe mental conflict, she was brought to know the Saviour.

After her second marriage, she heard that the Communion was to be observed in a certain parish, and she began to make preparations for attending. When her husband noticed this, he told her that he objected to her going, as it would be inconvenient for him to attend to the household duties. When she saw how matters stood, she went to some outhouse to pray, in the bitterness of her soul, she prayed audibly to God to have mercy on her husband, but if it was not in His purpose to have mercy on him, to remove him so that she might not be kept from the means of Grace. Her husband, who happened to hear her, got alarmed and made no further objections.

On her way to a Communion in Caithness, she sat on a hillock overlooking the Pentland Firth, where her two handsome sons, John and William, were drowned in early manhood. She was overcome with grief, and while weeping bitterly, she felt as if a heavy weight pressed upon her and a voice from behind addressed her, "You grudge your two sons to Me, though I gave My only begotten Son for you." She felt a great wave of joy pass over her, and from that moment, she ceased to mourn for them.

A very godly man, Murdo Robertson, lived in that district. There was a certain hollow where he used to

engage in private prayer, and sometimes when he enjoyed liberty, his petitions became audible. Jane happened to be out on the hill several miles from Murdo's house when she heard some unearthly voice. The thought occurred to her that what she heard was Murdo's voice, and that the angels were conveying his soul to glory. She went home in haste, got ready and made for Murdo's house, where she found that he had been called away about the time she heard the strange sound.

When Mr. Finlay Cook came to Caithness in 1817, having heard of this worthy woman, he paid her a visit. Jane took him to be a shepherd, as he was wrapped in a plaid, and said, "You are a shepherd." "Oh yes," said Mr. Cook, "I am the shepherd who has come to look after the flock." She prepared food for him, but he would not taste it till she would ask a blessing. The next time she saw him was in the pulpit at Strath-Halladale. Great was her surprise, for he had not made himself known to her. Afterwards, she would jokingly say to him, "And the shepherd has come." This "Mother in Israel" was called to her everlasting rest in 1845 at the age of 90 years.

JOHN MACDONALD, PORTSKERRA

At one time on the early part of the week of the Strathy Communion, Lucy Fraser, wife of Donald Gunn, Portskerra, said to John—"Pray for me that I may get shoes for the Communion," for her footgear was much worn. John went to his private devotions and when he appeared, he said to Lucy, "You will get money for your shoes, though what will provide it should come from Norway." That same week, an unusually large catch of salmon was got at the mouth of the Naver, and as the fish boxes there were all used, a message was sent to Portskerra to send boxes from the store there to the Naver. Lucy's husband



Strathy Bay.

was among those employed conveying the boxes, and for his labour, he got more than what paid for a pair of shoes for his wife. As it is possible that the salmon came across from off the Norwegian coast, some regarded John's prediction as being fulfilled to the letter.

John was on another occasion on the way to Creich Communion, and was accompanied up Strath Halladale by the said Lucy Fraser and a young girl who were going to Helmsdale (for it was the time of the herring fishing). As they were on their way up the Strath, Lucy said to him—"It is a pity that you have no chariot to carry you, seeing your Father possesses so many." John did not answer. They called at a certain house by the way, intending to remain there for the night, but they found no one within at the time. They then went to another house in the neighbourhood where they were kindly received. While food was being prepared, John went out to a secret place to engage in prayer, and when he came in, he said to Lucy, "You may prepare for continuing our journey, for I am persuaded a chariot will soon appear." In a short time, an empty carriage was seen passing up the valley. John and his two companions were soon on the road, and were given a lift by the driver all the way to Forsinard Hotel, where they were put up for the night without charge.

It is said that John, before the opening of the railway from Helmsdale to Caithness, was on his way to Creich Communion. He walked part of the way and stayed for a night in Achintoul Inn, in the heights of Kildonan. In the morning the waitress came with his bill, to whom he said, "I have no money, but I believe that He Who is above will see you paid." It happened that an angler was being accommodated in the hotel and that his room was immediately above the apartment where John had breakfasted. The maid, misunderstanding John's remarks, and thinking that the sportsman had promised to be responsible for John's expenses, went to him with the bill. "Here is

the bill sir, which a man below has told me you had promised to pay." The gentleman looked in astonishment and requested the man to be sent up to him. When John appeared, the visitor asked him whether he had given any authority to the waitress to come to him in connection with the payment of the bill. "Oh," replied John, "I did say to her that He Who is above would pay my bill, but I did not mean you, sir, but the Creator." "Well, my good man," said the kind-hearted angler, "if that is so, your confidence has not been misplaced, for I will most gladly pay your bill, and here are five shillings for yourself."

A similar incident is related of Peggy MacDiarmid. She was once along with a poor woman at a Communion. At the time, she had no money, and her companion had none either. As she was not asked into any of the houses in the village, she went to the local inn where they both had a meal and put up for the night. After breakfast, on the following morning, the maid came to Peggy with her bill, but Peggy said, "I have no money at present, but the Lord above will pay for it." At that very time, a peer of the realm happened to be staying in that hotel, and his bedroom was directly overhead. The waitress, taking the words in the literal sense, ran upstairs and told him the remark of Mrs. Mackay. His lordship was so pleased with her opinion of his generosity that he handed £5 to the maid to give to Mrs. Mackay.

John MacDonald was once on his way either to or from a Communion in Caithness when at Isauld, he saw a local mason, who had placed his box on the mail coach, purposing to proceed to Ross-shire to seek employment. He asked him what was his intention and the man frankly told him what he had in view. John was silent for a few seconds and then said, "You shall certainly get work, but it is not in Ross-shire." "Well," said the mason, "my present intention is to proceed to that county, for my box is on the conveyance." Just at the time, one of the estate

officials happened to pass, and said that he was looking for a suitable man to build stone dykes on the estate. The result was that the mason was engaged, and got work for many days without having to leave the parish.

Once John and his brother James, Donald Gunn and Murdo Mackay, were on their way to a Communion in Caithness. They were in the habit of staying on the way, in a house in the Isauld district of Reay. A member of the family a young man, was abroad, and as there had been no letter received from him for some time, his friends at home were feeling somewhat anxious. After family worship at night, when the four men retired to engage in private prayer, the landlady asked them to remember her absent boy at the Throne of Grace. When the worthies came in after secret prayer, John assured the anxious mother that her son was well. The other three did not commit themselves, but John told the mother that before they returned on the following week, a letter would come from her son. His brother James found fault with him lest he should prove a false prophet. John was perturbed, and feared that he spoke unadvisedly, but when they called on their homeward journey, they found that the long-looked-for letter had come. That son afterwards returned home, and died under the paternal roof.

CHAPTER XIII

SOME MEN OF CAITHNESS

ALEXANDER GAIR

ALEXANDER GAIR was born at Morrangie, near Tain, in 1772, and removed to Sutherland when he was 24 years of age. He first lived in Golspie where he learned and later worked at his trade as carpenter. It seems that it was while he resided in Golspie that he came under concern of soul. He had an unusually deep conviction of sin, and suffered deep distress.

He worked at the building of the Gordonbush farmhouse, and as he was a very competent tradesman, he was selected to construct the staircase, the handrail of which he made of the wood of local alder trees. Probably it was when he was employed at Gordonbush that he was, on one occasion, so overwhelmed with a sense of his sin, that, not knowing very well what he was doing, he attempted to cross Loch Brora near the narrow channel at Killen. How he landed on the other side he could never explain, except as an interposition of Divine favour, and so clear did the way of Salvation appear to him after reaching dry land, he could say with the Apostle, "Whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell." Afterwards, he used to say that notwithstanding the mental depths through which he had passed, and the extraordinary liberty with which his soul had been blessed on that memorable night, yet he would not rely for eternity on his wonderful experiences if they were not accompanied by hatred to sin and love to holiness.

After his marriage, he removed to Collieston in the parish of Loth. His faithfulness in bearing witness against the life and doctrine of the non-evangelical ministers in the Presbytery of Dornoch brought down on him the wrath of that party, who used their influence with the estate officials for his removal. Moreover, his growing popularity as a speaker at Fellowship meetings, and his influence among the "men" of Sutherland, excited their jealousy. The result was that, after spending seven years at Collieston, he had notice of removal served on him. It is said that matters were brought to a crisis by his refusing to make a coffin on Sabbath for Captain Gordon Cluness who was drowned in the Brora river. Sandy, when summonsed to leave his house, was naturally much upset, for he had the care of a young family, and expecting little pity from clergymen or factors, he brought his case before the Hearer of prayer. Now it happened that at that time there was a grieve at Kintradwell who loved the truth, and before whose mind the passage, "And the dogs licked the sores of Lazarus" was coming very frequently. The man could not understand what special message these words could have for him, so at last he resolved to call on Sandy Gair that he might cast light on the passage. When the grieve had told his errand, Sandy, instead of explaining the passage, simply asked whether there was any unoccupied house on the farm to which he could remove with his family (as he had to quit his dwelling). The grieve stated that there was a small building which was then unoccupied. "Go then," said Sandy, "And ask your mistress, Mrs. MacPherson, if she would pity my family and permit us to remove to that house, and come back again, and then I may tell you what I think of the passage." The grieve returned and called at the farmhouse, and saw Mrs. MacPherson, and told her of Sandy's request. Permission was granted, and the grieve, with a glad heart, went to bring the news, expecting to hear Sandy's view of the

text. "Well, you delivered my message?" he was asked. "Yes, I did, and I am happy to say that meantime you are permitted to occupy the empty house." "Oh, then," said Sandy, "I can now understand why that passage was so frequently occurring to your mind. You are one of the 'dogs', for, when the factors showed no pity, you did what you could to mitigate my distress."

But the officials, stirred up by the "Moderates", resolved that Sandy should not be allowed to remain on the Sutherland estate, and the result was that after a stay of a twelvemonth there, he was compelled to remove to Caithness. Shortly before flitting from Collieburn, he happened to meet a farmer who had a grazing near, and in course of conversation, the man said that the house could be used for one of his servants. "Well," said Sandy, "The house in which I stay shall never be occupied by one of your men, for it shall be tenantless until the day of judgment." The building was in a state of great disrepair when Sandy came to live in it: indeed, it was hardly habitable, and at his own expense he provided a door, window and roof, and considered that he was entitled to remove all the wood with which he had repaired the house. Accordingly, he had the timber removed with his personal belongings.

Very shortly after Sandy had flitted, a mason contractor, who was employed to erect some stone buildings nearby, started work one morning at a very early hour. He was short of building material, and seeing the hut which Sandy had quitted, without door or window and with its broken roof, he concluded it was unfit for further use, and so he began to cart away the stones, and use them in the new building. When the farmer came out, he found the house partly demolished, and meeting the grieve, he said, looking at the remains of the hut, "Well, I see you have made a prophet of Sandy Gair."

On his leaving Sutherland in 1817, he went to live in Achow in the parish of Latheron, where he remained for

seven years. After that, he removed to Blackburn in the same parish, where he resided till his death.

SOME SAYINGS OF SANDY GAIR

Sandy was once in Golspie with a company of worthies who were on their way to a Communion. They were taken to a house to partake of some refreshment on the way. Sandy was requested to ask a blessing, which he did in the following terms:—"Canaidh Tu ruinne gu' bheil sinn cruaidh is bu dual Duit a bhi fial. Thoir dhuinne Dhiot Fhéin na ní ar ceangal Riut, oir am fad 's a leigeas Tu leinn leigidh sinn Leat, 'is gus an d' thoir Thusa ní dhuinn, cha d' thoir sinn chaoidh ní Dhuit." ("Thou sayest of us that we are mean, and that is our nature, but Thou art the Son of the generous Father, and that is Thy nature. Give us of Thyself that which will bind us to Thee, for so long as Thou leavest us alone, we will leave Thee alone, and until Thou givest to us, we shall never give ought to Thee.")

In describing the experience of the believer, as one who moves between a lively hope and godly fear, he compared him to a vessel that had to pass through a long, narrow channel which was confined between two walls of rock. On the one hand, there was the ridge of Presumption, and on the other side were the beetling crags of Despair. To keep clear of the rocks was no easy matter, for the passage was narrow, and as the winds were often contrary, the vessel had to tack, with the result that sometimes when it struck on the cliffs of Presumption, it got some of its planks driven in. It sustained no less damage when driven against the frowning precipices of Despair. Nothing would have saved the shattered vessel from sinking but the presence of a skilled Carpenter who was always on board, and who, with a supply of suitable timber, repaired the battered ship. So much were the services of the Carpenter in evidence, that before the vessel reached the 'haven of rest', all her timber was renewed, for there was nothing left of the old material of the vessel before it

began its voyage to "the land that is very far off", but the remains of the outward shell which was got rid of and exposed for sale, and fell to the adversary.

Speaking of the mortification of sin in believers, he said, "The Most High took Israel out of Egypt in one night, but it took forty years to take Egypt out of them." "When Ziklag was burnt, David went with his trouble to the Lord, and was encouraged to pursue after the Amalekites. On his way he found an Egyptian youth, the servant of an Amalekite, to whom David said, 'Canst thou bring me down to this company?' The young man answered, 'Swear unto me that thou wilt neither kill me nor bring me to my master.' See here the condescension of the Captain, who was raised up to rule over Israel from Dan to Beersheba, in humbling himself so as to swear to a young lad that he would not deliver him to his master again, but what is such an act compared with the condescension of the Lord of Glory, Who gives His oath to the sinner that receives His Son Jesus—that He will never hand him over again to his old master, the devil."

"There was a legend that when the lioness gave birth to her cubs, they did not stir till the lion stood above them and gave three roars. But at all events, you, poor soul, can never move in newness of life till the voice of the Eternal calls three times over you—'Where art thou?', 'What has thou done?' and, 'The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent.'"

When any of the "men" in whom he had confidence, showed any unwillingness to lead in prayer at the meetings where he presided, he used to address them thus:—"Cha tusa bu chòir a bhith air deireadh ann an toirt air ais an Rìgh." ("You ought not to be the last to bring back the King.")

He could make use of the most withering sarcasm, though he generally kept this gift under restraint. Passing with a horse which was not overfed, on a country road,

he met one of the stipend-lifting ministers, who accosted him and referred to his hungry looking beast. "Oh yes," Sandy remarked, "I know my nag is lean in the meantime, but he will become fat enough when he gets a presentation." "I never heard", said the parson, "of presentations being given to horses." "Probably not," was the reply, "But it seems they are not infrequently given to asses!"

He could be most scathing in denouncing graceless ministers. On one occasion, in referring to the letters which Saul of Tarsus carried with him from the high priest on his journey to Damascus, he said, "Satan picked them up and sold them by auction, and who do you think secured them at the sale? The buyers were young graceless ministers."

Sandy was once in the parish of Clyne in company with some of the outstanding "men" of the Reay country, including John Mackay (MacConnail), John MacIntosh, Crask, and Joseph Mackay. A young boy in the district, having heard the old people speak of the big men (*daoine móra*) who had come, watched the house in which they were staying, for taking the words literally, he expected to see men of more than ordinary physical stature. At last, the worthies came out, and so anxious was he to get a good sight of them, that he ventured to follow them at a respectable distance. The boy, who was near enough to hear part of the conversation, could never forget some of Sandy's striking remarks.

One of the company asked whether any of the stubble, which the enslaved Hebrews gathered in the land of Egypt, could still be got. "Yes," said Sandy, "Satan finds use for it at the present day to deck the bonnets of vain young girls," for, at that time, it was fashionable to adorn the headgear with a profusion of artificial flowers and grasses—a custom of which the more exercised people strongly disapproved.

Sandy was once in Wick when he met with two ministers of whom he asked two questions which they answered in a way which he considered satisfactory. One of them then asked Sandy in a half scoffing way whether Adam knew Gaelic and spoke it. "Well", was Sandy's ready retort, "Whether the first Adam knew Gaelic or not, I am not sure, but I know that the second Adam has plenty, for many a time He has heard me when I addressed Him in that language."

Sandy Gair had a dark view of the signs of the times, and stated that he was glad his sun was not rising but about to go down. He lies buried in Latheron churchyard, where his remains await "the resurrection of the just".

PETER STEWART, HALKIRK

Peter Stewart was a native of Dalganachan in Strathmore of Halkirk. He was only 8 years of age when he came under concern of soul, and was much given to prayer. He was uncommonly strong in body. Once, with his devotedly attached friend, Donald Elder, Brubster, while crossing a moor, he found a two-year-old stirk of his, bogged in the moss. After they had succeeded in getting the helpless animal out of the marsh, he said to his friend, "Come, Donald, help me to raise this beast on my shoulders." He carried the animal all the way home, a distance of two miles.

One summer, Peter was busy building his peat stack close beside a river which flowed near his house. His wife, who had to attend to some necessary duties, brought one of the family—a boy of a few years of age, and left him in charge of his father. The good man, whose mind was meditating on some passage of God's word, had for a moment forgotten the little boy, who while playing on the river bank, had fallen into a pool below. The cries of the drowning little one brought the alarmed parent to the

stream, but before he succeeded in taking the child out of the water, life seemed to be extinct. He stretched what appeared to be the dead body of his boy on the bank. It did not occur to him to try artificial respiration, and, in his anguish of spirit, he felt that all he could do now was to pour out his heart before the Lord. He had not been long on his knees when the child began to show signs of life, and soon, to the inexpressible joy of the father, the boy completely recovered from the effects of his immersion.

Peter having undergone a saving change in early boyhood, did not have as deep a conviction of sin as had some of the worthies of the North. His growth in Christian life was gradual. In a conversation with John Grant, John expressed surprise that Peter, to whom he gave such a high place, was not able to follow him in his experiences. "Oh, John," said he, "Your growth has been so sudden that you have learnt these things in a short period, whereas in my case, it is little by little that I reach these experiences." But Peter must have been no ordinary man when so many of the best known and judicious Christians in his day gave him such a high place. John Tait, of Drakries, regarded Peter as the foremost of the Caithness "men", and the meek and saintly John Sutherland, Badbea, once in hearing his name mentioned, said of him, "Deas làmh diadhachd an Taoibh Tuath." ("The right hand of North Country godliness.")

The eminent William MacKay of Syre, shortly before his death, expressed a desire that Peter should succeed him in the office of catechist in Strath Dearn. The people of that valley held as sacred the dying wish of the saintly catechist, and it speaks volumes for Peter's worth that the then minister of Moy, the godly Mr. Hugh Mackay, who, while labouring in the Dirlot Mission, was intimately acquainted with him for Peter was one of his regular hearers—should have been so cordial in securing him as his catechist.

Peter was immensely popular in Strath Dearn and the neighbouring valleys. During the ministry of the Rev. James MacLachlan, the catechist, by arrangement, took charge of the meeting in Dalarossie Church on the Sabbath when the pastor preached at Moy. When Peter conducted the meeting, many of the Strath Nairn people came, but they were not so diligent when the minister officiated. There was one man who was annoyed to see that the minister had only a very thin audience when he came to Dalarossie, while the catechist had often a crowded house. So he resolved that, for once, Mr. MacLachlan should have the pleasure of preaching in a full church. Accordingly, one Saturday, he proceeded to the Manse at Moy, and suggested that as the next day was Peter's Sabbath at Dalarossie, the Minister should come up himself, but without giving any hint of departing from the usual rotation. Mr. MacLachlan agreed to the proposal, and next day when he made his appearance, a look of surprise was depicted on many a countenance, and not a few gave unmistakable signs of disappointment. In one of the pews sat a venerable-looking matron who had come all the way from Strath Nairn in the hope of hearing the catechist. When she was aware of the Minister's presence, she blurted out loud enough to be heard by a number around her, "Oh, dear me, what has brought that man here." Peter was catechist in Strath Dearn for the long period of forty-two years. He was called to his rest in March, 1840, and is buried in the Chapel Yard, Inverness.

ROBERT SUTHERLAND, ACHSCORCLATE

Robert Sutherland so loved the gates of Sion that he continued to attend the preaching of the Word even when he was physically so weak that he had to rest at several places on his way to the house of God. One day, he was sitting beside the path which led to the meeting house of

Dirlot, for there were no roads in those days, when a comparatively young man, who was making a great profession of religion, though he had not a very high place in the estimation of discerning Christians, appeared. When he came up to where Robert was resting, he said:—"I am surprised that after all the worthies you have seen, and all that you have heard, and all that you have experienced, you should be over-taxing your strength in coming out to the meeting." "Well," replied the aged saint, "I cannot deny that I have seen much and heard much, yes, and that I have had precious experiences, but these things are past and gone; but yet I have something even better than all that, for I feel my need of a Saviour more than ever I did."

Robert engaged in droving, and on one occasion, when he was on his way south with his charge, he arrived on a Saturday at Golspie. He had a great desire to be present at Sheriff MacCulloch's meeting, and so he got hold of a boy to whom he promised to give some money, if he would look after his animals until Monday. Having left his charge with the youth, somewhere between the village of Golspie and the mouth of Loch Fleet, he crossed over the Little Ferry, purposing to remain on the Dornoch side of the estuary until Monday morning. Having retired to bed in the house where he was accommodated, very early on Sabbath morning he felt rather anxious about the cattle, and got up and set out in order to see if they were all safe. As he proceeded on his way, he had to pass a small cottage where an eminently godly woman named Jane MacIntosh, lived. When she heard his footsteps at the front of her house, she came to a small window at which she tapped and called out, "Is that you, Robert Sutherland?" and on being informed that it was, she continued—"You are afraid that some of your beasts have gone astray, but you need have no fear; proceed no further; do not be breaking the Sabbath; go back, and you shall find everything safe on Monday." The good man acted on the worthy woman's

advice, and on Monday morning when he reached the young herd, not a single animal was missing.

One season Robert was preparing to set out with a drove to one of the English markets—probably Carlisle. Neil MacPherson was then catechist in Halkirk, and the custom then was for every household in the district to contribute sixpence towards the catechist's salary. Robert had not paid his share, and so he called on Neil before starting for the south. As he was coming away from Neil's house, he offered his usual contribution, which was refused. After some little interval, Robert again produced the sixpence, but Neil declined to take it. He made a third attempt, and this time the catechist was willing to receive the coin. Robert was greatly surprised at his friend's action, and enquired why it was that after having twice refused to take the money, he at last accepted it. "Well," said Neil, "when you last offered me the sixpence, that passage—'Am not I better to you than ten sons?' came very forcibly before my mind, and I have every confidence that you are to have a prosperous journey."

When near the Clyde, but probably on his way back, he saw a gentleman on horseback attempting to cross the river at a place where the water was deep. Robert, who was well acquainted with the fords, shouted out to the man, and directed him to a place where he could pass over in safety. The rider happened to be a medical man, and one who was deeply pious: and so interested did he become in Robert's conversation and company, that he invited him to his house and prevailed on him to stay with him for six weeks. In this way, Neil's words were verified, for on that journey, not only did he prosper in business, but he found his stay with the excellent doctor profitable for his soul.

Some think that Robert's host was a Dr. Meikle, a godly doctor belonging to one of the Seceding bodies, who lived at Carnwath.

ALEXANDER GUNN, CAOLDALL

Alexander Gunn lived in Caoldall in Strathmore of Halkirk. He was locally known as Alasdair Mac-Dhòmhuill 'Ic Chailein. In person, he was squat and strongly built, and he always wore the kilt.

A spiritually-minded man, he was no stranger to the wiles of the tempter. Between himself and Hector Munro, Forsinard, there was a strong bond of friendship. Once when the latter called at Caoldall, he noticed that his friend there looked very sad; and when he asked what ailed him, he received the striking reply—"I have not seen Satan since a week." "Oh, is that what you say? We do not wish to see him at all." "But," Alasdair answered, "I prefer to see him in front of me than to have him behind me, for he is then sure to be plotting mischief for me."

Alexander called on John Grant, who then lived in Strathy, concerning his intended emigration to America, when the inhabitants in the uplands of Strathmore and many families in the heights, and some in the lower parts of Strath-Halladale, were being evicted in 1807. After the two had been exchanging views with regard to Gunn's proposal to cross the Atlantic, John said to him—"Is i an fhairge do leabaidh." "Ma's e," ars Alasdair, "nach glan an leabaidh i, agus cuiremaid ar n-aghaidh oirre." ("The sea shall be your bed." "If so," said Alexander, "is it not a clean bed? Let us set our face to it.")

Alexander, as is well known, was drowned on "Long mhór Ghallthaobh". As the ship was sinking, his voice was heard above the cries of the passengers, singing a Gaelic Psalm.

APPENDIX

MEMORANDUM REGARDING DR. JOHN MACDONALD,
LATE MINISTER OF THE FREE CHURCH, FERINTOSH,
FROM THE RECOLLECTIONS OF DAVID MACKENZIE,
FREE CHURCH, FARR

(This memorandum has no date)

The first time I saw Dr. MacDonald was in Autumn, 1805—soon after he was licensed by the Presbytery of Caithness. He was sent round the Reay country and the West Highlands by Sir John Sinclair to collect from old men who remembered traditionally the Poems of Ossian. I remember quite well at that time, Mr. John MacDonald taking down some of these Poems in writing from an old blind man in Tongue Manse ; but I remember also what is much more refreshing, how the worthy old minister of Tongue welcomed the young preacher of the Gospel to his house, and how he made him take part in Family Worship. This is my first faint remembrance of Dr. MacDonald.

I did not see him again until we met at Reay, at the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in August, 1815.

At that time, he and the late worthy Mr. Donald Fraser, Kirkhill, came to assist at Reay. That was the year I came to Farr. I cannot forget that season—the comfort I had in the society of these good and godly men. That was the first time I heard Dr. MacDonald preach, on Monday in English—and his text was Eph. 1, 22 and 23—the Headship of Christ over the Church, and over all things for the church. The Doctrines he advanced that day for the Headship of Christ, he had to vindicate twenty-eight years afterwards at the Disruption.

The next time I saw Dr. MacDonald was in August, 1816, at the sacrament at Reay. It so happened on that occasion by a singular Providence, that during Friday, Saturday and Sabbath, he and I were the only officiating ministers—Mr. Mackay of Reay having been wholly laid aside by indisposition. I was then but young in the ministry; and little acquainted with his incessant labours. But on Saturday evening, when it appeared that each of us must take charge of a congregation next day, and when with his well-known zeal he said to me—“Now it is needless for you to object—take the English on Sabbath and I will take the Gaelic, or take the Gaelic and I will take the English.” When I say I remember his zeal for the glory of God—his brotherly sympathy for me—not so accustomed to such duties as he was—I cannot but admire him more and more. Sabbath day came—a large congregation assembled—I took the English and he the Gaelic. I preached the action sermon in English and after serving the English communicants, four in number, went to the Tent, communicated, and then served a table in Gaelic, at which my worthy friend communicated. The Lord carried us through the duties of the day, in the two congregations, without being a public reproach.

It may be some got edification that day. Many of the Lord's people were there. I never could forget a note of Dr. MacDonald's that day at the Communion Table. He referred to what Peter says—“Which things the angels desire to look into”, and with an *emphasis* peculiarly his own, he said—“And where are our eyes as to the things the angels desire to look upon.”

I have been so particular as to the year, 1816—early impressions are deep I cannot forget them. The next time I saw Dr. MacDonald was at Thurso in August, 1817, at the Sacrament.

He preached on Saturday in English, from the text, “And He shall be called Wonderful”, and it was a

wonderful sermon. He preached on the same occasion Sabbath evening, in English, on the door being shut, when the foolish virgins came asking entry. Afterwards I occasionally met Dr. MacDonald at Reay sacraments ; but not often in Mr. Mackay's time. The last time I saw him was at Mr. Cook's, in Shebster in 1847. He was that year at Wick and came to assist part of the time of the days of the Sacrament at Shebster. Although I cannot at this date remember his words, I cannot forget the strain of practical and experimental godliness with which he closed the Gaelic meeting on Friday at that time. I can never forget the delight Mr. Cook had in his society, while he remained at his house. Little did we think that was the last time we were to see our esteemed friend within our bounds and that was the last time I saw him.

Dr. MacDonald did occasionally, although not often, visit within the bounds of the Presbytery of Tongue.

I wish to note down some things as to these visits. His first visit was in 1830. He then came to plead the cause of the Scottish Missionary Society. He did not come further than Strathy and Farr—the roads to the West of the Reay country were not made. The crowds who attended his ministry then were great, and the collections were liberal at Strathy and Farr. His next visit to the bounds of the Presbytery of Tongue was in 1834. He then came to Assynt, Eddrachaolis and Durness ; and I think assisted on sacramental occasions in these parishes, but he came by Tongue and Farr to Caithness. In Caithness that year, he preached repeatedly on Sabbath and week days. He returned by Farr and Tongue, and here I must be more particular as to his progress through Tongue and Farr. He preached at Farr, October, 1834, in the Field. Many came from Strathy and Tongue. It was a day of solemnity. His text in Gaelic—John 15, 5, “ Without Me ye can do nothing ”, and in English—Romans 3, 27, “ Where is boasting then? It is excluded ”. After dinner,

Dr. MacDonald and I visited godly Adam Bain, who was then unable to come out, and within two months of his Heavenly rest. We had a comfortable conversation with the godly man. At parting, I proposed that Dr. MacDonald should pray. He stood up at the *cairn* (fireside) where we were and prayed. Mr. Hugh Mackay, now minister Free Church, Kilmuir—who was then a student and Dr. MacDonald's charioteer, because he drove the gig—Mr. Mackay told me he heard Dr. MacDonald in every exercise he was engaged in publicly through Sutherland and Caithness, but such a prayer as he had in Adam's house for unction, he did not hear all the time.

Next day, Dr. MacDonald went to Tongue where he preached. I went to hear him—Oh! he was lively and agreeable. After dining at Tongue Manse, he went to Altnaharra. Mr. Hugh Mackay and I accompanied him. The shepherds of Mudale and Clibrig got notice he was at the Inn—and they came out of their smearing tubs. On seeing them, Dr. MacDonald lectured on the fifty-third of Isaiah—especially on "We all went astray as lost sheep." You would think he had been all his days a shepherd literally watching the straying sheep, but he spiritually applied all that.

An aged worthy woman, Mrs. Douglas, Clibrig, can never forget that lecture. I believe this Mrs. Douglas is a real Christian. From Altnaharra, Dr. MacDonald went next morning to preach at Lairg. His last visit to the Reay country was in June, 1844. He came round by Assynt and Eddrachaolis, and assisted at the Sacrament at Durness. He came this length, and preached at Strathy and here and at Tongue. It was then that Mr. Horsburgh at Tongue dismissed so many workmen for attending his preaching. The congregation who assembled here was uncommonly large. Among them was David Sutherland (the parish Minister), but got a red face in hearing Dr. MacDonald preach from the text—Acts 4, 19-20. The godly

man bore his testimony that day in the parish to the cause for which he and others had to make such sacrifices, but the cause which the Lord will uphold because it is His own.

Besides my interviews with Dr. MacDonald at Reay, Thurso, and in this county, I saw him at Loth the time of a Sacrament in 1829, at Inverness at the Assembly 1845, and in Edinburgh at Sacrament October, 1845. What I have to say of him according to my knowledge of the Scheme of Redemption is that when I saw and heard him, I saw and heard a true Evangelist, a scribe well instructed in the things of the Kingdom of Heaven—one who earnestly longed for the salvation of souls—one who sought not himself but then glory of his Master—one who well understood both Covenants—one who wished to direct sinners to escape from the first Covenant to the second and one whose Theology on Doctrine and in Practice was wholly moulded and modelled by Paul's system in his Epistle to the Romans and in all his Epistles to the Churches.

I heard William Achina, a godly man in this parish and no mean judge, say that a sermon preached by Mr. MacDonald at Reay in 1815 was as complete a compendium of Divinity on the Covenant of Grace, as ever he read.